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Blessed Grignon De Montfort

HIS LIFE, LABOURS,
PILGRIMAGES, AND
APOSTLESHIP TO MARY

BY

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*WITH A FOREWORD BY HIS GRACE THE
ARCHBISHOP OF TUAM*

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FOREWORD

THIS sketch of the Life and Labours of the Blessed Grignon de Montfort is a companion booklet to Father M'Geoy's little work on the *Priests of Mary*, published in 1909, which has already done so much to promote devotion to the Blessed Virgin. It is not, as the writer says, a full and complete Life of De Montfort, but it gives in a comparatively short space an admirable sketch of the leading events in his life and of his devoted labours in promoting the glory of God and of His Blessed Mother. It is an excellent book for missionary priests, because it gives a very true and touching picture of all the good that can be accomplished by a zealous and devoted soul, who gives his whole life to the service of God. We venture to hope that the Pilgrims to Lourdes will provide themselves with copies, for it will do much, if read in a

devout spirit, to make their pilgrimage fruitful. Hence we cordially recommend it to all clients of Mary as a little book that will greatly tend to strengthen their devotion to the Mother of God.

PREFACE

THIS little volume cannot be regarded as a biography of Blessed Grignon de Montfort. Those who would learn full particulars of his remarkable career will find them in the exhaustive Translation of the French Life of De Montfort, with its beautiful Introduction which was brought out some forty years ago by the London Art and Book Company. To this work, by the gracious permission of the Publishers, I am indebted for many facts herein related.

Interwoven with those details, fresh features have been introduced in the following pages. A short history of Jansenism is given, together with selections and comments on De Montfort's poems ; the progress of the Associations founded in his lifetime is recorded ; and the whole subject is brought up-to-date by an account of the " Association of Priests of Mary " which, though in existence for only seven years, now boasts a membership of over 6,000 ecclesiastics from all nations on the earth.

Although the incidents of Blessed De Montfort's

life of sufferings, crosses, and missionary labours are interesting and instructive to us who live in the twentieth century, they do not appeal so suggestively as the spirit of prophecy that inspired his words and that shone forth in his writings.

It is this side of his personality that fascinated his great champion and admirer, the saintly Father Faber, who tells us that " he comes forward like another St. Vincent Ferrer, as if in the days bordering on the last Judgment, and proclaims that he brings an *authentic message* from God about the greater honour, and more prominent love of his Blessed Mother, and her connection with the second advent of her Son."

This message was his *Treatise on True Devotion to Mary*, diabolically concealed for many years, and mysteriously discovered, as he had foretold.

I have, therefore, linked it with his name, and have endeavoured to set forth its principles and practice in the light of History and Tradition, as a fitting adjunct to the narration of his life, and as a reminder that it was intended, not so much for those amongst whom he lived and worked, as for generations to come. The spirit which it breathes of humble submission or slavery to Jesus,

through Mary, should prove a corrective to the arrogance and wordliness that now prevail, and an attraction to the many pilgrims to the Shrine of Mary, whose "living waves from all nations laden with prayer and penance break on the shore of the distant Gave," where, in the wonders of Lourdes, they behold the fulfilment of Montfort's burning words about the triumphant reign of Mary and her prominent place in those days of incredulity and doubt.

THOMAS M'GEOY.

Feast of the Purification,
1913.

INTRODUCTION

TOWARDS the end of the year 1909, a distinguished convert and preacher delivered a lecture in Dublin upon Lourdes and its wonders that created a deep impression on the minds of those who heard him.

As an introduction to his discourse, he told his audience that he had been taught to believe that the age of miracles had passed, that Almighty God practically always, except by the power of His inward grace, left men entirely to themselves, and that there was no longer any of those evident signs of His power, and His presence, such as those by which Christianity was originally established.

It was not, he said, until he came into the Catholic Church that he was face to face with the miraculous element in the world. He went to Lourdes in a spirit of inquiry, a doubting though reverential Thomas. He came away convinced—convinced that miracles had taken place, that he himself had seen them worked during his short stay, and that every effort was made on the part of the Catholic authorities to record

none but absolutely authentic cases in the history of miraculous happenings in this wondrous place.

It may seem irrelevant thus to preface this effort at chronicling the life of Blessed Grignon de Montfort, who lived and laboured two hundred years ago.

Yet, when we bear in mind that this great servant of Mary was raised up to preach the establishment of her reign in latter times, and to predict the signs and wonders that would usher it in, it may not seem at all out of place to quote his words as a striking confirmation that De Montfort had not lived in vain, and that we are privileged in this twentieth century to witness the most ample fulfilment of his prophecies.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD	iii
PREFACE	v
INTRODUCTION	ix

CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION OF DE MONTFORT	I
--	---

CHAPTER II

DE MONTFORT'S TRIALS IN PARIS	4
---	---

CHAPTER III

DE MONTFORT'S EARLY DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN—HIS LOVE OF CROSSES—HIS PRACTICE OF THE "SLAVERY OF MARY"	12
--	----

CHAPTER IV

DE MONTFORT'S ORDINATION—HIS MEETING WITH M. LÉVEQUE AND HIS JOURNEY TO NANTES	17
--	----

CHAPTER V

DE MONTFORT'S FIRST EXPERIENCE OF MISSIONARY WORK—HE IS PERSECUTED BY THE JANSENISTS—HIS APPOINTMENT AS CHAPLAIN TO THE HOSPITAL IN POITIERS—HIS DEPARTURE FOR PARIS	21
--	----

CHAPTER VI

DE MONTFORT'S RETURN TO POITIERS—HIS TRIALS CONTINUED—THE PERSECUTIONS OF THE EVIL ONE—THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE "DAUGHTERS OF WISDOM"	29
---	----

CHAPTER VII

	PAGE
DE MONTFORT'S PROGRESS IN THE DIOCESE OF POITIERS—HIS OLD ENEMIES THE JANSENISTS SUCCEED IN OBTAINING HIS REMOVAL	33

CHAPTER VIII

DE MONTFORT'S PILGRIMAGE TO ROME AND HIS RETURN	38
--	----

CHAPTER IX

DE MONTFORT'S VISIT TO RENNES AND MONTFORT —HIS MISSION AT LA CHÈZE	42
--	----

CHAPTER X

DE MONTFORT'S LABOURS IN HIS NATIVE TOWN AND DIOCESE	47
---	----

CHAPTER XI

DE MONTFORT'S WORK IN THE DIOCESE OF NANTES —THE CALVARY OF PONTCHATEAU	50
--	----

CHAPTER XII

DE MONTFORT'S EXPERIENCES IN NANTES	57
---	----

CHAPTER XIII

DE MONTFORT'S MISSION IN LA ROCHELLE	61
--	----

CHAPTER XIV

DE MONTFORT'S WORK IN LUÇON AND LA ROCHELLE —THE BEGINNING OF THE ASSOCIATION OF THE COMPANY OF MARY	66
--	----

CHAPTER XV

DE MONTFORT'S SEARCH FOR SUBJECTS FOR HIS COMPANY OF MARY—HIS SERIOUS ILLNESS AND WONDERFUL RECOVERY—HIS VISIT TO M. BLAIN	74
---	----

CONTENTS

xiii

CHAPTER XVI

	PAGE
DE MONTFORT'S JOURNEY FROM ROUEN TO NANTES—HIS RETURN TO LA ROCHELLE	81

CHAPTER XVII

DE MONTFORT ESTABLISHES THE CONGREGATION OF THE DAUGHTERS OF WISDOM	85
---	----

CHAPTER XVIII

BLESSED DE MONTFORT COMPLETES HIS ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF THE COMPANY OF MARY	89
--	----

CHAPTER XIX

DE MONTFORT'S MISSION IN SAINT POMPAIN	93
--	----

CHAPTER XX

HIS LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH	97
--------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER XXI

DE MONTFORT'S PERSONALITY—HIS DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT AND TO MARY HIS MOTHER	100
--	-----

CHAPTER XXII

DE MONTFORT'S "TREATISE ON TRUE DEVOTION TO MARY"	105
---	-----

CHAPTER XXIII

DE MONTFORT'S "TREATISE ON TRUE DEVOTION TO MARY" CONTINUED.	109
--	-----

CHAPTER XXIV

DE MONTFORT AS A POET	124
---------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXV

	PAGE
DE MONTFORT AS A PREACHER	136

CHAPTER XXVI

THE COMPANY OF MARY	140
-----------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXVII

THE CONGREGATION OF WISDOM	145
------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE PRIESTS OF MARY	146
-----------------------------	-----

BLESSED GRIGNON DE MONTFORT

CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION OF DE MONTFORT

LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNON DE LA BACHELERAIE, afterwards designated Montfort, was born on the last day of January, 1673, in the little town of Montfort-la-Canne, then in the diocese of St. Malo, now in that of Rennes. His parents—Jean Baptiste Grignon Sieur de la Bacheleraie, advocate to the Bailliage of Montfort, and his wife, Jeanne de la Visuelle-Robert—were both of noble family, although not rich in the goods of this world. They had eight children, of whom Louis was the eldest. At Confirmation his incipient devotion to the Blessed Virgin prompted him to ask for the privilege of bearing the name of Mary. In after-life he substituted “Montfort,” the place of his birth, for that of his family, probably to remind himself continually that ties of blood had no longer any claim upon him, and that he was dead to the world.

The earliest sentiment of piety which developed

in his soul was the growth of devotion to Our Lady, which he manifested not only by having her name affixed to that which he received in Baptism, but by his early efforts at bringing others into subjection to her holy slavery. He was never weary of those youthful labours on her behalf. He was in the habit of inducing a favourite sister, Louise, to recite her Rosary with him and encouraged her in this pious practice by many little presents.

His conduct towards his parents was remarkable for a tender and thoughtful solicitude for their wants and comforts, and a desire to anticipate their slightest wishes.

At the age of twelve they sent him to a college in Rennes, then conducted with great success by the Fathers of the Society of Jesus. He soon won the warm approval of his superiors, who, after a short probation, received him into the Congregation of the Blessed Virgin, then comprising only the most fervent and pious scholars. The members of this admirable society were encouraged to practise the frequent reception of the Sacraments, the recitation of the Office of Our Lady, and the exercise of those virtues of chastity and modesty that safeguard the purity of young souls aspiring to the ecclesiastical state.

At that time there lived in Rennes a devoted priest who took a lively and practical interest in the members of this promising confraternity. Louis was amongst those who won his esetem and proved himself a loving and apt disciple.

From this good priest he learned the secrets of spirituality and a spirit of self-sacrifice which impelled him to spend his recreation hours, not in play and lawful amusements, but in tending to the wants of the poor and sick in the hospitals.

To these labours of love he added an occupation that filled his spare time, and which, while gratifying his artistic temperament, proved a valuable source of assistance in his career as a student, and afterwards as missionary. He was possessed of a natural taste for painting, and he succeeded so well in his early efforts that many copies of religious pictures which he designed were eagerly sought after by those who admired his skill. The purchase-money thus obtained was devoted to the expenses incurred in taking lessons from a professional painter, and the knowledge thus acquired was turned to good account in later times in the decoration and painting of poor churches which were the scenes of his labour in the ministry.

In addition to the valuable friendship of this good priest and mentor, whose name has not been preserved, the young ecclesiastic was fortunate enough to find wise and sympathetic guides and instructors in Père Descartes, his spiritual director, and Père Gilbert, his professor. Both of those good men soon recognized the good qualities of De Montfort, and exerted themselves to enrich his mind with a knowledge of Scripture and theology that proved of invaluable service to him in his ministry.

CHAPTER II

DE MONTFORT'S TRIALS IN PARIS

YOUNG Montfort not only secured the good wishes of his superiors and professors, but also gained the esteem of his class-fellows and companions. One of those who were brought into intimate contact with him, and who often gave testimony of his virtues, was M. Blain, afterwards Doctor of the Sorbonne and Canon of Rouen. He tells us in his memoirs that "in a class of four hundred students, M. Grignon appeared a model of goodness. Even then he gave himself up to exercises of prayer and penance, and could find no delight in anything but God. All those pleasures in which youth finds so many charms were to him insipid. He could not speak of them, nor had he any idea of them, for his whole childhood had been passed in admirable innocence, and in utter ignorance of evil. He kept such a watch upon all his senses that not an inconsiderate gesture or look or word could be discovered in his behaviour. His eyes were almost always lowered, and the air of holiness which spread over his face and his whole person already marked him out in some sort from the rest, and distinguished him from his school companions."

From the very commencement of his life in the Seminary he was favoured with an intimate knowledge of the grandeur of Mary, and his close union with her increased daily. Never did he fail, when going to class, to enter the Church of the Carmelites, and to remain kneeling a considerable time before an ancient and miraculous image of the Blessed Virgin. His early piety did not go unrewarded, since it was at this place, as he himself confessed, that the knowledge of his vocation to the ecclesiastical state was granted to him—a knowledge so clear and certain that he had no need of any further deliberation, no reasonable doubt of his call to the sanctuary. Here, too, probably, he received inspirations for his future apostleship of extending the reign of Mary in the hearts of men.

All his aspirations were now concentrated on the prospect of completing his education in the renowned Seminary of St. Sulpice, then regarded as a school of the highest ecclesiastical perfection, and he was never forgetful of this longed-for happiness in his frequent prayers and Holy Communions.

He had not long to wait for an answer to his petitions.

A lady named Madame de Montigney had lately come from Paris to Rennes on business and had taken lodgings in his father's house. She became wonderfully touched by the piety and modesty of her host's son, and soon interested

herself in his progress. She sympathised with his laudable ambition to become an inmate of the Seminary in Paris, since she was conversant with the reputation which the College of St. Sulpice had already acquired.

On her return to Paris she wrote to the father of Louis, stating that she would find the means of gratifying the latter's desire to enter the Seminary, and that he might set out on his journey to the capital as soon as he pleased. Great was his joy at this unexpected and welcome intelligence, fervent his thanksgiving to his benefactor who had opened a way for his entrance to the haven of his longing aspirations.

He lost no time in preparing for his departure, and after a touching and affectionate farewell, he set out on his momentous journey.

To save expense, he determined to walk the whole way from Rennes to Paris, a distance of seventy-six leagues.

With eyes often raised to heaven, with the name of Mary ever on his lips, with his heart in St. Sulpice, he felt no fatigue. Rejoicing in hardships and humiliations, he made rapid progress in spite of many difficulties, and at the end of ten days he found himself traversing the streets of Paris.

Madame de Montigney had been expecting him, and greeted the way-worn pilgrim with every indication of respect, and with thoughtful hospitality made him forget the discomforts of his long and painful journey.

After a sufficient rest she brought him to the superior of a small community founded only a few years before by a former Curé of St. Sulpice, and he was at once made at home amongst companions who vied with one another in rendering him happy and comfortable in his new surroundings.

His first year there glided quickly by. All his desires appeared to be gratified, and in prayer, silence, study, and congenial occupations he prepared himself for his first step to the Sanctuary. He soon was privileged to receive the tonsure, and when he uttered the words of renunciation, *Dominus pars haereditatis meae*, he felt that at last his sacrifice was complete, and that he had said farewell to the world, and all the world holds dear.

But alas for human foresight, this dream of bliss was destined to receive a rude awakening. A dark cloud was gathering slowly over the destinies of France. Times had become very trying. A year of scarcity had succeeded a period of comparative prosperity. Misery and starvation began to prevail in Paris, and the resources of the rich scarcely sufficed for the wants of the poor. Amongst others, his kind benefactress had come to grief, and she found herself reluctantly obliged to discontinue his pension.

He was now suddenly confronted with the prospect of being obliged to leave his beloved retreat, to discontinue his studies, and to go out into the hard world to which he had bid, as he thought,

an eternal adieu. He found himself without friends, without means, without any earthly hope of pursuing his ecclesiastical studies.

Montfort was not, however, disheartened. He had already learned to school himself in the maxims of those who rest upon God, and anchor their hopes upon His Merciful Providence.

Instead of giving way to useless fears and anxieties, he preserved an uninterrupted calm, knowing full well that when God had called him to Himself he would find a way out of the difficulties that beset his path. And such a way was found : not, indeed, without its drawbacks and deficiencies, but still affording him the means of continuing his course, and of availing himself of the services of his professors.

The superior did not wish to lose such a promising and deserving student as Louis proved to be, and decided that, with some others, he should be employed in keeping watch over the parish dead, from their decease until their burial, and that the stipend attached to this office would be accepted by the College authorities instead of a pension.

To others this alternative might prove disagreeable and repugnant, but to De Montfort it was welcomed as opening out many prospects of gratifying the insatiable desire for mortification and self-denial which, even at this early age, seemed the dominant feature of his life.

The vigil by the side of the dead, recurring

three or four times a week, was for him a source of reflection on the vanities of this world, the certainty of death, and the dread hereafter that awaited all.

It is related that, when he arrived at the place where he was to pass the night, he gave himself at once to prayer, ignoring all surroundings and apparently unconscious of every source of distraction. In this exercise he generally remained four hours on bended knee. The next two hours were devoted to spiritual reading. Two hours more were devoted to sleep, and the remainder of his time was employed in the study of his notes on theology and Scripture which he had taken during the lectures at the Sorbonne.

On his return to the seminary one day he received the sad intelligence of the death of the superior, M. de la Barmondière, who had saved him from being thrown on the world by providing the means just recorded for his maintenance and education.

The existence of the little community founded by this holy priest ended with his life, and there was a general dispersal of all its members—some to their families, others to the larger Houses of St. Sulpice, while to those who, like De Montfort, had no resources and no friends, a return to their old life, with all its dangers and temptations, seemed to be the only course left open.

In this embarrassment his reliance in God once more came to his relief. He had heard that there was to be found, somewhere in the city, a very

poor community of ecclesiastics who were governed by an excellent priest, M. Boucher. He at once presented himself, and his appearance, together with his past record, impressed the superior so strongly that he at once admitted him.

He rejoiced at his good fortune of practising that severe mortification and self-denial for which his soul craved, in an establishment that could barely afford to offer the necessities of life to its impoverished inmates.

No wines were used, the meats were of a most repulsive description, so that meal-times seemed rather intended for a struggle against the nauseating effects of distasteful food, than for refreshment and support.

All the students took their turn in the kitchen, and Montfort was quite happy when he was called upon to act as cook.

It was not long before the continuance of ill-regulated diet produced consequences which, in De Montfort's case, seemed almost fatal. He was seized with an attack of illness which confined him to bed, and afterwards required his immediate removal to the hospital of the Hôtel Dieu. Here he was treated with all the tender solicitude which his state required, and the kind and devoted Sisters, recognizing his sanctity and resignation, spared no pains to preserve a life so valuable and so full of promise. Notwithstanding all their efforts he gradually appeared to sink, and his condition was pronounced hopeless. All the time

he was quite unmoved, serene, and trustful in God's Providence.

When apparently on the verge of death, he calmly and positively announced his speedy recovery in such unequivocal terms that he seemed to have been favoured with a supernatural intimation. And so it fell out that, when things were at their worst, all at once he began to improve, and his convalescence progressed rapidly and uninterruptedly. The circumstances surrounding his illness, its fatal progress and miraculous change for the better, created a deep impression and brought him a host of friends, whose charity and generosity enabled him to acquire a sum equivalent to the full pension required for admission to the large Seminary of St. Sulpice, and he was thus saved further anxiety regarding his prospects.

CHAPTER III

DE MONTFORT'S EARLY DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN—HIS LOVE OF CROSSES—HIS PRACTICE OF THE "SLAVERY OF MARY"

THE prominent characteristic of De Montfort's life in the College was a spirit of profound and scrupulous obedience—the rule of life. His friend, M. Blain, speaking of this virtue, says: "Always the first and most assiduous in the exercises of the community, he knew nothing of dispensations, and I do not know that he ever made use of one in his life." This was not the only good quality which shone forth as a source of edification to his companions.

It is worth while, in this respect, to quote the testimony of another of his class-fellows. He says that "De Montfort appeared so equable and recollected in all his actions that I am persuaded that he never lost sight of God. I went one Sunday at ten o'clock in the morning to ask him for some papers I wanted. He must, I think, have been at prayer, for when I knocked at the door of his room and he came to open it, his face appeared to be luminous and shining with a more than natural light. I was often with him at recreation time, during which it was his greatest

pleasure to speak of God and the Blessed Virgin, and he talked in such a way that it was impossible to leave him without feeling animated with zeal and fervour. He was gay without being distracted, and it was easy to see by his manner and conduct that he was far more occupied with God than with the amusements in which he was engaged.

“He had, however, none of that false spirituality, which, under the pretext of a more enlightened and detached perfection, affects to have no recourse to sensible objects, of which he made use continually, because he knew by experience how suitable they are to recall the mind and the heart to God, and how many graces He attaches to their use.

“From his childhood he had always a singular devotion to the Holy Rosary. The lights with which God favoured him but strengthened this practice, and as a mark of devotion to Mary he generally wore his rosary attached to his girdle. He was still more careful never to lose sight of the image of Christ crucified, and when he was studying he was always in the habit of placing it before him, together with that of His Holy Mother.”

Such is the testimony of one who knew him well, who was privileged to gaze into the depths of his soul, and to forecast the triumphant career of this servant of Mary.

When forbidden to mortify himself according to his wishes, he was ever on the alert, without erring against obedience, to take advantage of

every occasion that afforded him an opportunity of self-inflicted punishment and humiliation.

The smallest and most inconvenient room was chosen by him in preference to more spacious and more comfortable apartments, and thus we see him, during the greater part of his time in the seminary, living right under the roof, where he was obliged to suffer most intensely from the heat in summer and the extreme cold in winter. He never allowed himself a fire, although he was obliged to pass entire days in his room without taking any exercise. His clothing was thin and light, and to ensure greater inconvenience and suffering, he was in the habit of wearing stockings without any feet in them, a practice which he observed all his life.

The love of crosses and trials seemed to him to be a second nature, and his thirst for them was soon experienced, even in the peaceful and spiritual atmosphere of life in St. Sulpice.

He was commanded by his superior to lessen the number of his penances, and to adapt himself to the weakness of human nature by refraining from constant conversation upon religious subjects with his companions. To test his sanctity, rebuffs were showered upon him. The countenance of his superior had for him only an air of severity, his lips dry words, his eyes disdainful looks. Not only for days, but for six long months, were those apparent persecutions inflicted upon him. Yet they excited not the slightest movement of resent-

ment or uneasiness, and when the humiliation was over, the victim went up to the very person who was its author, with as much simplicity and joyful greeting as if nothing untoward had happened.

At last the period of trial came to an end, and the whole community was obliged to acknowledge that they were blessed with the presence of a subject schooled in the highest degree of perfection. Favours were now conferred on him in rapid succession. He was employed as librarian, and given the post of master of ceremonies, and, to crown his happiness, he was entrusted with the care of the beautiful chapel of the Blessed Virgin, behind the choir, in the parish church of St. Sulpice.

No greater honour could be conferred upon him than the care of this shrine of Our Lady, and he was never tired of cleaning, beautifying, and ornamenting it with a loving tenderness.

It was at this period of his life that his first efforts at promoting what was afterwards titled "True Devotion to Mary" were first made. Some one placed in his hands M. Boudon's work on the "Slavery to the Blessed Virgin," and he was so much taken with its contents that he obtained leave from M. Trouson, the Superior-General of the Seminaries of St. Sulpice, to spread this beautiful practice in the House.

He tells us in his *Treatise on True Devotion*, "I generally say, 'the slave of Jesus in Mary; the

slavery of Mary in Jesus.' I might, in good truth, as many have said before, say, 'The slave of Mary; the slavery to the Holy Virgin,' but I think it better to say 'The slave of Jesus in Mary,' as the Superior-General of the Seminary counselled an ecclesiastic who consulted him upon the subject."

Next to his zeal in preserving and adorning the shrine of Our Lady, and in promoting love to her among his fellow-students, was the delight he took in discharging the duties of catechist to the wild and untutored children of the Faubourg St. Germain. His whole heart was in the work, and many who came to listen through curiosity were touched in spite of themselves, and went away comforted and contrite. "They came to scoff, and they remained to pray."

CHAPTER IV

DE MONTFORT'S ORDINATION—HIS MEETING WITH M. LÉVÊQUE AND HIS JOURNEY TO NANTES

FOR seven years had De Montfort prayed, struggled and studied, ever buoyed up with the consoling thought that God, who had called him to the Sanctuary, would not desert him when his probation was pronounced as finished. Not without fear and trepidation did the solemn invitation of the ordaining Bishop fall upon his ears.

Although the longing of his heart seemed, at last, to be realized, it required a formal order from his superiors to induce him to present himself, and to assume the burden of the priesthood.

He was ordained priest on the 5th June, 1700, by Mgr. de Flamanville, the Bishop of Perpignan, to whom the Cardinal de Noailles, Archbishop of Paris, had entrusted the conferring of Holy Orders in his diocese.

The whole of that memorable day was spent by him in thanksgiving before the Blessed Sacrament. There, filled with a wondrous soothing comfort that clothed his soul like a precious garment of grace, he gave way to loving expressions of gratitude and joy which spoke of the tumult of rejoicing that filled his heart.

It was some time before he could be persuaded to offer up the Holy Sacrifice. He considered that his preparation for that great event should occupy several days passed in prayer, penance, and recollection. The place he selected for his first Mass was the little chapel of the Blessed Virgin, behind the choir, in the parish church of St. Sulpice, endeared to him by so many tender associations.

M. Blain, who assisted him on this occasion, says: "He seemed to me like an angel at the altar, nor was I the only one struck by his angelic appearance. One of his brother seminarists who was present noticed the same thing, and spoke to me about it. To test his real feelings, I remarked that several of the newly-ordained priests, whose names I mentioned, had also appeared very devout while celebrating for the first time; he replied: 'That is true, but nevertheless *what a difference.*'"

From this sacred moment his one consuming and all-absorbing desire was directed to the salvation of souls, his chief occupation the acquisition of the science necessary to render him a profitable and successful labourer in the Vineyard of the Lord.

When he judged himself sufficiently prepared for the work, he besought his superiors to send him to Canada, where a wide field for his zeal had just opened.

They, however, refused his petition, as they feared that he would allow himself to be carried

away by the impetuosity of his nature, and that he would be lost in the vast forests of that country while labouring for the salvation of the savages.

Though deeply disappointed at this response to his prayer, he at once saw in it a manifestation of the will of God, and resigned himself submissively and cheerfully to await some sign that would indicate to him the field of labour that Divine Providence had chosen for him.

At the end of three months of prayer and study he happened to meet with an ecclesiastic who, though grown old in missionary work, was yet as full of fervour and enthusiasm as when, many years before, he had devoted himself to the arduous work of rescuing souls from the world of sin that was around him. His name was M. Lévêque. He came occasionally to visit St. Sulpice, journeying from Nantes, where he had formed an association of priests under the patronage and title of St. Clement. To him De Montfort seemed irresistibly attracted, and when, after a short acquaintance, M. Lévêque invited him to join his congregation, it was no matter of surprise that when the Superior of the Community of St. Clement left St. Sulpice for his home at Nantes, he had for his companion Grignon De Montfort, rejoicing in the prospect of commencing his apostleship under a master of such sanctity and experience.

They set out from Paris in the month of September, and having reached Orleans embarked upon a small vessel which plied between that city and

Nantes, on the river Loire. Amongst the passengers on board were three libertines whose entire conversation was one horrid series of indecent expressions mingled with fearful blasphemies.

De Montfort, stirred to the heart by those impieties, fearless of consequences, reproved their conduct, and reminded them of the judgment of an angry God whose name they were blaspheming. They replied to him with insults and mockery, and ridiculed his efforts at conversion and reproof. He then, as one inspired, told them that they would soon meet with the punishment which they deserved. His words were almost immediately verified. One of them died of the effects of intoxication. The other two quarrelled, fought a duel, and were severely wounded.

CHAPTER V

DE MONTFORT'S FIRST EXPERIENCE OF MISSIONARY
WORK—HE IS PERSECUTED BY THE JANSENISTS
—HIS APPOINTMENT AS CHAPLAIN TO HOSPITAL
IN POITIERS—HIS DEPARTURE FOR PARIS

ON their arrival at Nantes, after a short time spent in preparation, arrangements were made to undertake missions in the country parts of the diocese, and the work was continued during the winter up to the month of February in the following year. No record has been given of De Montfort's progress in this, to him, long wished-for opportunity to spend himself for the salvation of his countrymen.

It would seem that the commencement of his labours gave promise of a long and fruitful career in this portion of the Lord's Vineyard, inasmuch as he was blessed with the guidance and instruction of a superior whose sentiments and aspirations were congenial to his own, but he very quickly found out that those who laboured with him were cast in a different mould, and that they were more or less imbued with the spirit of Jansenism, an error which was then in the ascendant, and which appeared to have eaten into the very vitals of the French Church.

Its most offensive doctrines were kept out of sight, and its followers lived and moved and exercised their priestly functions, nay, even undertook the guidance of souls, while all the time they were undermining the very Church which gave them their authority and jurisdiction.

They asserted that our Redeemer did not die on the Cross for all men, but only for the predestinate, that the rest of mankind did not receive from God a sufficient grace to avoid mortal sin.

The Jansenists claimed that absolution was invalid if it were given before the penance imposed was performed, and in many cases attempts were made to revive the ancient canons by which the sentence of pardon in the sacrament was deferred until years of public penance had been spent.

It was in the year 1640 that the *Augustinus* of Jansenism first appeared, and the party who supported the doctrines contained in that work, some of which we have enumerated above, was strong enough, in the year 1789, to destroy the Catholic hierarchy of France, and to set up what was called the constitutional clergy in its stead.

It is true that for some time it seemed to sleep after an act of feigned submission to the Holy See, but the heresy had been only scotched, not killed, and in 1702 the famous "Cas de Conscience" appeared, and the mask was cast aside. This declaration aimed a mortal blow at piety by discouraging frequent Communion, and its errors culminated in the famous "Synod" summoned

by Ricci, the schismatical Bishop of Pistoga,¹ in defiance of Rome.

De Montfort had been always taught to regard the progress of this movement with horror and repugnance. His inborn respect for the Church and authority revolted against its rebellious teachings, and when he found himself in contact with men who were steeped to the lips with its harsh and repelling teachings he at once determined to sever himself from all connexion with them, and by this step he earned for himself a lifelong persecution from their sympathisers and their friends.

After an affectionate farewell with his superior, M. Lévêque, he set forth for Nantes, whence after a short stay he went to Poitiers, where he had a commission to execute for his old benefactress, Madame de Montigney.

On the morning of his arrival at Poitiers he celebrated Mass in the hospital of that city. The recollection and fervour with which he discharged that sublime duty, and the long thanksgiving that followed it, made a deep impression on the poor who had assisted at the celebration. It happened, perhaps providentially, that they were at that time deprived of a chaplain. Moved, as it were, by a sudden inspiration they called out to each other: "Here is a saint. Here is the man for us. Let us detain him and try to keep him." They

¹ "The Spirit of Jansenism," Introduction to *Devotion to the Sacred Heart*, by Father Dalgairns.

surrounded him, called him "father," begged of him to have compassion on their condition, and pressed him in the most endearing terms to take up his abode with them.

Moved by their entreaties, and recognizing in their appeal the voice of God, he said to them : " My friends, I am but a stranger here, I cannot remain with you without permission."

One of them, encouraged by his apparent wish to comply with their prayer, undertook to write in the name of all the poor to Mgr. de Girard, Bishop of Poitiers, who was then absent from the city, and Montfort on his part consented to await the Bishop's reply.

Meanwhile he was indefatigable in his exertions to benefit the people amongst whom he found himself so fortunately and so happily located, and he daily preached and catechized the children in the market-place. He visited the hospitals frequently, and he extended his efforts even to the welfare of the young ecclesiastical students, whom he formed into a little " circle " or union for prayer, praise, and innocent recreation.

After a month's absence, the Bishop of Poitiers returned, and the petition of the inmates of the hospital was put before him. His Lordship thought it well to consult the Superior-General of St. Sulpice regarding the qualifications of De Montfort for the management of the institution. The reply to his letter of inquiry contained such a flattering notice of the applicant that he hesitated no longer

in receiving him, and on the 25th of August of that year he wrote as follows : " The poor continue to desire you. I think it right, therefore, to tell you their wishes, which together with what M. Leschassier has taken the trouble to write to me concerning you, make me believe that God wishes you to be near them, if Mgr. your Bishop be kind enough to give his permission. I beg of you then to ask it of him, and, if granted, to avail yourself of it as soon as possible."

Fortified by this message, and by the consent of his Bishop, Montfort set himself with characteristic enthusiasm to work in his new sphere of duty. There was ample room for the exercise of his zeal. Disorder prevailed everywhere, and the sources of revenue necessary for the support of the inmates had decreased to an alarming extent. To remedy this sad state of things he resolved to give up his salary. He took no other food than that of his beloved poor. The alms he received from his friends were devoted to the decoration of the church, and to the purchase of necessities for the sick, and to supplement these contributions he did not hesitate to go through the city with an ass laden with baskets filled to overflowing with the gifts of the charitable people of the city.

His spare time was devoted unreservedly to the infirm, and his recreation consisted in waiting on them at table, in sweeping their rooms, preparing their beds, and in performing the many distasteful and menial services that fall to the

lot of those who minister to the sick and the dying.

Even here he did not want for his crosses and humiliations. He tells us in a letter written on the 4th July, 1702, to M. Leschassier, "I entered this poor hospital, or rather this Babylon, with a firm resolution of bearing, in company with Jesus Christ my Master, the crosses which I well foresaw would certainly befall me if the work were from God. All that I was told by several experienced ecclesiastics of the city, (who endeavoured to dissuade me from entering the house of disorder, which appeared to them incapable of improvement) only increased my desire of undertaking the work notwithstanding my own inclinations, which always led me, and still lead me, to the missions. The Bishop himself and all the officials were the first to authorize me to allow the poor to dine in the refectory, and to go out and collect something to eat with their dry bread. This I did for three months, not without many rebuffs and contradictions, which increased from day to day to such a degree that I was obliged to give up charge of the dinner tables."

Two of his greatest persecutors were the lady superior in charge of the institution and a male official who occupied a position in its management. De Montfort at last thought it the better course to retire for a time and make a retreat at the house of the Jesuit Fathers,

When he returned to his work, comforted and strengthened by prayers and the peaceful influences of his surroundings, he found that both his tormentors were stricken with sudden illness and taken away by a sudden death, a circumstance that made an immense impression and afforded a manifest proof that God was on his side, and that his patience and forbearance would be no longer strained by the constant annoyance he sustained from the unfortunate pair.

He resumed his duties undismayed by a rapid increase of patients who were forced to enter the hospital by sickness and poverty, and who included a small but turbulent section of discontented inmates.

He even extended his labours to the part of the city remote from the hospital, preaching, catechizing and hearing confessions. He found time amidst those many occupations to give weekly conferences to the ecclesiastical students of the college, and to guide them in the spiritual difficulties that beset them in deciding their vocations.

One thought never forsook him during this time of labour and devotion, and its frequent recurrence at last induced him to interrupt his self-imposed tasks for a time. He had never forgotten that all the while his sister was anxiously awaiting his arrival in Paris, and that he had only intended to make a short stay *en route* at Poitiers.

He could no longer be deaf to the voice of

affection and duty, and tearing himself away from his beloved poor, he set out for Paris, where he arrived in the month of September, 1702. He found his sister in great distress owing to her failure in satisfying the great desire of her lifetime, to enter a religious community. She was unprovided with a dowry, and had no influential friend who could introduce her to some of the religious Orders whose resources would enable them to receive her without the usual portion. Her saintly brother tried in vain to secure a sum sufficient for the purpose. His efforts were fruitless, and he was about to send her back to her relations when a holy priest of St. Sulpice intervened and brought him back to the Convent of the Dames du Saint Sacrement, in the Rue Cassette, who agreed to receive his sister, and a lady came forward unexpectedly who offered whatever money was necessary. He had, therefore, before leaving Paris, the consolation of seeing all the obstacles removed that at one time seemed to effectually prevent the entrance of his beloved sister into religion.

CHAPTER VI

DE MONTFORT'S RETURN TO POITIERS—HIS TRIALS
CONTINUED—PERSECUTIONS OF THE EVIL ONE
—THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE “ DAUGHTERS
OF WISDOM ”

DURING the absence of Blessed de Montfort in Paris, which lasted for a period of three months, his old friends in Poitiers were calling out for his return, and urgent messages were frequently sent placing in the strongest light the spiritual desolation to which his children were reduced, and the claims they had on his paternal heart to resume his residence amongst them. He could no longer hold out against their repeated solicitations, and accordingly the beginning of the year 1703 saw him once more in his old position as chaplain of the hospital. He lost no time in restoring many wise regulations that had been made during his last chaplaincy and had since fallen into disuse, and even added some new much-needed observances with the approval of the governors and of the new Bishop, Mgr. Claude de la Poyne Vertrieu.

His untiring zeal urged him not merely to confine his efforts to the congenial task of looking after the sick and poor of the hospital, but induced

him to engage in various missionary works in the city, such as preaching in different churches, hearing confessions, and carrying on a large correspondence with many who sought his advice on spiritual matters.

It was about this period of his career that he was subjected to a violent and malignant persecution, not arising indeed from the malice of men, nor from any earthly source, but from the arch-enemy of God's chosen people, who could no longer conceal his spite at the victories that De Montfort was gaining in the never-ending conflict between the elect and the powers of darkness.

Of those diabolical visitations which tormented him the first that was made known was revealed to a young cleric who accompanied him to a house of retreat not far from Poitiers.

After retiring to rest the young cleric was disturbed by a loud noise that undoubtedly proceeded from the room in which the holy man was alone. It seemed as if three or four persons were fighting with great violence. In the midst of the blows he could distinctly hear the voice of Montfort exclaiming, "I mock thee ; I shall not fail in strength or courage as long as I have Jesus and Mary to help me ; I laugh thee to scorn."

Other persons have also declared that they had seen him dragged violently along the ground without perceiving any person who dragged him, and that they then heard him cry out, "O holy Virgin, come to my aid."

In addition to those annoyances he was obliged again to experience trials and difficulties arising from the jealousy and ill-feeling of those who were entrusted with the management of the institution, and who looked with undisguised contempt upon his improvements.

For a long time past he had become convinced that, in conducting the affairs of houses like the hospital, very little can be expected from those who have not been trained in the exercise of charity and obedience, and who always have selfish interests that interfere with the discharge of duties which demand self-sacrifice and ungrudging attention to the wants of the poor. It was to this consideration we owe the foundation of a congregation of devoted women which was destined to become famous in the history of religion, and under the beautiful title of "Daughters of Wisdom" to confer lasting services to France, and later on to all parts of the world.

Not long after his return from Paris to Poitiers he carried this long-contemplated project into effect by choosing eighteen or twenty poor girls of the hospital as the pioneers of the movement. They were virtuous, some of them were suffering from ulcers, others were blind, maimed, and deformed—all were animated with true piety.

He gathered them together in a room of the hospital which he named "La Sagesse," and he placed in it a large cross, still preserved, in order to recall to their minds the mystery which the

world calls folly, but which is, none the less, in the judgment of St. Paul, the wisdom of God. To those young girls he gave a rule of life. They rose at four o'clock, spent an hour in prayer, recited five mysteries of the Rosary, heard Mass, and worked in the hospital until dinner-time. At one o'clock they recited five more mysteries of the Rosary, worked until half-past five, and then spent half an hour in prayer, after which they recited the remaining mysteries of the Rosary. They were bound to silence in all places, and at all times, except during the hour of recreation after dinner, and half an hour after supper.

Such was the humble beginning of a society that was destined to achieve great conquests in the cause of charity and the benefits of civilization, but De Montfort foresaw that he would not live to witness the growth of this magnificent tree which he planted on a soil apparently so barren and unproductive.

CHAPTER VII

DE MONTFORT'S PROGRESS IN THE DIOCESE OF
POITIERS—HIS OLD ENEMIES THE JANSENISTS
SUCCEED IN OBTAINING HIS REMOVAL

DE MONTFORT did not remain long in Poitiers after this memorable foundation—a veritable grain of mustard seed that was to germinate and bring forth fruit a hundred-fold only when the saintly founder was long consigned to mother-earth.

The opposition he experienced from a hostile group of officials, who resented his zealous efforts at reform with an insane hatred, assumed so serious and dangerous a form that he found himself reluctantly compelled once more to resign his position, and to go forth in search of the occupation that was ever uppermost in his heart—the conversion of souls, the demolition of the empire of sin, and the establishment on its ruins of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Intent on this quest, he sought an interview with the Bishop of Poitiers and offered himself to give missions and retreats in his diocese. His services were joyfully accepted, and he was sent without delay to open a mission at Montbernage, a suburb of Poitiers, where disorders of every

description prevailed, and the voice of religion was stilled in the daily conflicts that raged, and the general dissipation that affected all classes and sections of the community.

The holy man was not dismayed. He boldly faced the multitude. He spoke of the judgment of God in terms that filled their hardened hearts with fear; he denounced their wickedness in no measured terms. He preached penance, and gradually and persuasively he brought back those erring souls to the observances of religion that had been abandoned. Drunkenness disappeared, the Sabbath was observed with former devotion, and practices to encourage piety and renew fervour were renewed and fostered.

In order to perpetuate the success of this memorable event, he determined to erect a chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin under the title of "Queen of our Hearts," where the faithful could assemble for the recital of the Rosary and for the usual prayers that were offered during the mission. It happened that a deserted farmhouse occupied a position that seemed most suitable for this purpose, and without hesitation he appealed to the people to help him to raise funds that would be sufficient to purchase the vacant building and to convert it into a chapel.

His words had the desired effect, and in a short time, not only was the money provided, but a handsome and commodious house of worship stood in the place of a ruined and deserted tenement.

To testify his joy at their diligence he gave them a statue of "His good Mother," which was placed on its altar and is still preserved, and for many years after the Blessed Missioner had passed away the people of Montbernage continued to assemble in crowds every evening in this place to say the Rosary, and to consecrate themselves to the "Queen of our Hearts."

About this time Madame d'Armagnac, the wife of the Governor of Poitiers, was in the last extremity of illness, and was given up by her physicians. Père La Tour, Montfort's confessor, begged of him to say Mass for her. After having celebrated the Holy Sacrifice he went to inform his friend that the lady would recover her health. His confessor then asked him to carry the good news to the lady himself, and he promptly obeyed. On entering the sick room he said "Madame, you will not die of this illness; it is God's holy will that you should still remain upon earth, and that your days should be prolonged in order that you may continue your charities to the poor."

The lady from that instant began to recover, was soon quite well, and lived for twelve years longer. This was not the only instance of his wonder-working power and of the prophetic sagacity that marked his progress through the diocese of Poitiers. Innumerable miracles of grace daily attested the supernatural character of his work. Crowds followed his footsteps, hung upon his

words, and confessed their sins, and every mission brought an increase of worshippers who swelled the glorious army now enrolled under the banner of "Our Lady, Queen of Hearts."

This state of things, however, did not suit the calculations of his old enemies, the Jansenists, who never forgot nor forgave his refusal to work with their followers in Nantes.

The heresy had by this time made great headway in all parts of France. For a long period it had conspired against Rome, not in the open like the preaching of Calvin and Luther, but in secret conclave and insidious plotting. All the time its propagators had clung sternly to the Church that condemned them over and over again, and each time by some miserable evasion they strove to ignore the sentence pronounced against them. Many of their leaders had obtained a passing reputation for learning and sanctity, and they often attached themselves to ecclesiastics eminent for their orthodoxy and piety. They even attempted to win over St. Vincent de Paul and Cardinal Berulle to their side, but the saintly instinct of these two men was too much for the Jansenists and they gave up their efforts baffled and defeated.

We need not wonder, therefore, under these circumstances, that the Bishop of Poitiers came under the spell of those plausible emissaries who recognized in De Montfort a powerful and relentless opponent of their doctrines, and determined to ruin him in the estimation of the simple Prelate

by false reports, and drive him from the scene of his labours.

Unfortunately, they succeeded too well in their machinations, and one morning as the holy man was preparing to give a retreat to the nuns of St. Catharine, at Poitiers, he received an order from the Bishop to discontinue his ministry in the diocese.

He took this curt dismissal with his usual serenity. He did not seek to ask the reasons for the course adopted, or to justify himself in the eyes of his Superiors. In fact, he seemed relieved, as the situation thus created afforded him the opportunity of executing a project that had been the dream of his life, namely, to make a pilgrimage to Rome in order to submit to the successor of St. Peter the desire which he always entertained of preaching the Gospel to the heathens, and of shedding in their midst his blood for Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER VIII

DE MONTFORT'S PILGRIMAGE TO ROME AND HIS RETURN

BEFORE starting on this long-looked for journey, De Montfort sent a touching letter of farewell to the people amidst whom he had laboured so fruitfully and so zealously. This memorable communication is still preserved, and its conclusion contains the keynote of his life's success as missionary and apostle. After encouraging them to persevere in the promises they had made to him at the conclusion of their missions, he reminds them of the power of Mary: "With her all becomes easy. I place my confidence in her although the world and hell should storm against me, and I say with St. Bernard, '*Filioli, haec mea maxima fiducia est, haec tota ratio spei meae.*' Get these words explained to you. I should never have dared to put them forward of myself. It is through Mary that I look for, and shall find, Jesus, that I shall crush the serpent's head, and that I shall overcome my enemies and myself to the greater glory of God."

On the same day that this letter was penned he set out on his pilgrimage in true Apostolic manner. The only provisions he made consisted

of a copy of the Holy Bible, a crucifix, a rosary, an image of the Blessed Virgin, and his staff. He gave away to the poor the few coins he possessed, determining to trust to Providence for food and shelter. He fasted every day. Sometimes he passed whole days without a morsel of bread, and at night he had no place to rest his wearied limbs. Only once did he pause on the way, and that was at Loretto, where he remained for a short time full of the consoling thought that he could rest and pray in the same house that sheltered Jesus and Mary.

Refreshed and strengthened by his stay he resumed his pilgrimage. He appeared to walk as in a dream of rapture, and felt neither discomfort nor weariness, until at length there appeared, as a golden haze on the horizon, the outlines of the purple dome of St. Peter's, with the crimson rays of the sun resting on its glittering cross. He prostrated himself on the ground, and gave vent to the pent-up emotions which the first sight of the "City of the Soul" ever brings to the penitent and pilgrim. Taking off his shoes he walked bare-foot the two leagues that still separated him from Rome. Heedless of the thousand distracting noises of the busy city, in recollection and in silence he proceeded to the temple that shelters Peter's tomb, where he remained long in thanksgiving that the desire of his heart was at length gratified.

After a due time spent in visiting the numerous churches and places of religious interest in the

Eternal City, he sought with true humility an audience with Pope Clement, who then ruled the Church with gentle but firm sway.

His prayer was soon granted, and the audience was fixed for the 6th June. He himself afterwards said, at the sight of the successor of St. Peter, he had felt an extraordinary sense of reverence, as if he had seen Jesus Christ Himself in the person of His Vicar. He was in no way confused, and after having kissed the feet of His Holiness, he read to him with confidence a short Latin address that he had carefully prepared. The Pope listened kindly to him, and then told him he might speak in French, as he understood that language sufficiently well to converse with him in it. Montfort then expressed to him the desire which he had long entertained—to preach the Gospel to the heathen, in the hope of shedding his blood for the faith. He then added that he had come expressly to learn the will of God from the mouth of His Vicar, and that he was ready to labour in any part of the world to which he was sent.

The answer came swift and straight. Stretching out his hand in the direction of France, whence the pilgrim had come, Clement said, "You have in your own country a field worthy of your zeal." He then entered into details with regard to the mission he was about to confide in him, enjoined on him to combat the errors of Jansenism which he had just condemned, and commanded him to teach the Christian Doctrine to children and to

the people, and to make the ancient spirit of Christianity flourish again, by renewal of the promises made at Baptism. He conferred on him the title of Missionary Apostolic. He granted him the privilege of giving several benedictions and attached to the crucifix which he presented a plenary indulgence for all those who, truly contrite, should kiss it at the hour of death whilst pronouncing the holy names of Jesus and Mary.

De Montfort rose from the feet of the Supreme Pontiff, no longer uncertain of his future, perhaps somewhat disappointed that his longings after a martyr's death were not to be gratified, nevertheless filled with a sense of duty and obedience to what seemed to him now as the undoubted will of God in his behalf. Little did his Jansenist enemies imagine, when they had succeeded in securing his ignominious dismissal from the diocese where his ministry was so fruitful, that he would soon return, the chosen champion of the Holy See, to confound their errors and demolish their insidious arguments.

He lost no time in leaving Rome, and after a long and painful journey arrived on the 25th August, the Feast of St. Louis, his Patron Saint, at the Priory of Liguge, near Poitiers, where he was received with a warm welcome by his old friend and follower, Brother Mathurin.

CHAPTER IX

DE MONTFORT'S VISIT TO RENNES AND MONTFORT— HIS MISSION AT LA CHÈZE

AFTER a short rest and retreat, followed by pilgrimages to Notre Dame des Ardilliers, at Lamur, and to Mount St. Michael, to whose protection he owed his preservation from many dangers, he determined to pay a visit to his birthplace, where he arrived on the Feast of All Saints.

He avoided entering the town, and stopped at a small village about a mile distant. He sent Brother Mathurin, his companion, to beg of a poor woman who had been his nurse to give shelter to a priest and his fellow-pilgrim, but his prayer was refused. He then presented himself at two or three other houses, and asked for the love of God for a little straw to form a bed ; but he asked in vain. At last he came to the cabin of the poorest man in the village, named Pierre Balun, who joyfully received him and left all he possessed at his disposal. Notwithstanding his attempt at concealing his identity, he was soon recognized, and those who had refused hospitality to him, amongst whom was his old nurse, came sorrowful and anxious to make amends for their seeming unkindness to their saintly townsman.

On his way to Montfort he had seen his uncle at Rennes, who brought him to visit his parents. They were then staying in that city. He had therefore no call of duty to detain him long in his birth-place, and he at once proceeded to offer his services to the Bishop of his own diocese, who sent him to join a band of priests just commencing a mission in the town of Dinan. He assumed the office of catechist, for which he was peculiarly adapted, and he was so filled with zeal at the result of the mission that he applied for the necessary faculties to give another to the soldiers of the garrison, which proved equally gratifying and productive of lasting fruit. He then, with the consent of his Bishop, accepted the invitation of M. Leudiger, Superior of the Missionaries of St. Briene, to come and assist him, and he laboured in different parishes in the diocese of St. Malo and of St. Brieu.

At one of these places—La Chèze—there was a large chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, under the title of Our Lady of Pity. It was then in a state of ruin, with the wild grass growing on its floor and a luxurious crop of briars and nettles bursting through its empty windows. It had formerly been the scene of the labours of St. Vincent Ferrer, the great Apostle of Brittany, who had found it, even in his time, desolate and abandoned. He wished to restore it, but his prophetic instinct seemed to warn him that the task was reserved for another saint destined to

wear his mantle and to be imbued with his spirit of foresight. Before departing he assured the people "*That this great undertaking, the restoration of the church, was reserved by God for a man whom the Almighty would cause to be born in the latter times, a man who would remain unknown, a man who would be much contradicted and laughed at, but a man who, nevertheless, would bring this holy enterprise to a happy issue.*"

No truer portrayal of Montfort could be given, and no ampler fulfilment of a prophetic utterance could be made than in his prompt and energetic action. Whether he was aware of the prediction or not, his zeal for the House of God and his devotion to Mary did not allow him to look upon those sacred ruins with indifference. The undertaking seemed formidable and the resources were nil. Yet undismayed and hopeful he set to work, and money came to him just when it was wanted. The restoration gradually advanced as if by enchantment. He engaged masons and carpenters, provided materials, and assisted at the decoration of the interior. He erected a High Altar in the Roman style, surrounded by statues of the saints and a very rich balustrade. Upon the altar arose a large cross, and at its foot a statue of Our Lady of Pity. The work was pushed forward so rapidly and vigorously that everything was ready at the close of the mission of Plumieux, which followed that of La Chéze.

For nine days he prepared the people for the

solemn opening of the restored church, and on the 9th May he carried, with all pomp and splendour, the statue of Our Lady of Pity to its appointed place in the sanctuary. The procession marshalled for the occasion, was remarkable for its order, and for the numbers that took part in it. The people walked five abreast, with their rosaries in their hands. The silence was only interrupted by the singing of hymns and joyous canticles. An ancient chronicler describing the scene says: "It seemed as if the angels had come down from heaven to arrange such beautiful order."

The altar of this chapel of La Chèze and the cross with gilt rays which surmounted it, no longer remain, but the statue of Our Lady of Pity is still preserved and is treasured by the faithful people as a relic of the apostle's zeal in the cause of true devotion to Mary. Even to this day is still shown the little room he inhabited when giving the mission, with a stone under the name of Fr. Montfort's pillow.

Before he left the scene of his labours in La Chèze he suppressed a fair that was held on Ascension Day and which caused a great deal of disedification. He met at first with some opposition, and, notwithstanding his protests, one man in particular persisted in selling a cow. Before evening he lost the price that he had got for it, and the purchaser was deprived of the animal, which, with others, was attacked with a fatal disease. He himself became paralysed in all his limbs and was

only healed by asking pardon of the missionary. Many other extraordinary incidents marked the close of this time of reform and reconciliation with God. More than once De Montfort multiplied bread to feed his poor. He restored health to a number of invalids, amongst the rest a daughter of Madame de Villethibault, who for a long time had been subject to fits of epilepsy. He assured her that she would never suffer again from anything of the kind, and the prediction was fulfilled to the letter.

Amidst the sighs and tears of the whole city De Montfort departed, and after a short stay in St. Briec, where he gave a retreat to the Daughters of the Cross, he returned to his own diocese and retired to a small hermitage about half a mile distant from his native town of Montfort.

CHAPTER X

DE MONTFORT'S LABOURS IN HIS NATIVE TOWN AND DIOCESE

It was September, 1707, when De Montfort retired to the retreat of St. Lazare, where he restored a small chapel that had there fallen into ruin, and spent a considerable time in prayer and meditation as a preparation for the renewal of his missionary labours. He then resolved to commence his work in the ministry by giving a mission in his native town. Crowds filled the church, and numberless conversions were wrought. On one occasion, after ascending the pulpit, he was seen to pause and to take from his cincture a large crucifix which he constantly carried with him. He placed it in a conspicuous place in the pulpit, from which he descended without a word, thereby giving the congregation to understand that it was Jesus Christ Himself who was preaching to them and that it was to him they were to listen. Then taking up a smaller crucifix he presented it to the faithful, exclaiming, "Behold your Saviour. Are you not grieved for offending Him?" This mode of preaching, eloquent in its silence, produced a wonderful and far-reaching effect.

Leaving his native town sanctified and confirmed

in the faith, he proceeded to Bréal, where he opened a mission on the Feast of All Saints, 1707. One evening as he was returning to the presbytery after a hard day's work in the confessional, he heard loud cries proceeding from a house which he was passing. He entered with his usual intrepidity and found a man ill-treating his wife. De Montfort endeavoured to pacify him, but his efforts seemed to incense the unfortunate wretch to such an extent that, seizing a hatchet, he raised it over De Montfort, who calmly bent his head to receive the blow; but it never fell, for the arms of the would-be murderer suddenly stiffened and the instrument of his mad revenge fell clattering to the ground.

Even this intervention of the Hand of God did not seem to move the hardened heart of the miserable sinner, as he listened with sullen countenance to the exhortations of the man of God, who, when leaving him, predicted that in punishment for his crime he would die poor and miserable. In a short time he lost all his property, and during the last years of his life he was seen to beg his bread from door to door, and he died on a bed of straw in a strange house, where in charity he was allowed to finish his miserable life.

De Montfort continued to work zealously and fruitfully in his native diocese until the month of August, 1708. It was about that time that the malice of his old enemies, the Jansenists, enraged at his success, became sufficiently developed and

so banefully directed as to influence the Bishop and to induce him to forbid the missionary to give any instruction to the people except in the parish churches. De Montfort felt that his persecutors would not be content with this restriction, and to avoid any further misinterpretation and perhaps scandal he determined to leave the diocese, and with saddened heart but unfailing resignation he hastened to place his services at the disposal of an old friend, Father Barin, Vicar-General of Nantes.

CHAPTER XI

DE MONTFORT'S WORK IN THE DIOCESE OF NANTES— THE CALVARY OF PONTCHÂTEAU

FATHER BARIN welcomed the distinguished and saintly visitor as one sent by Providence for the sanctification of the great diocese of Nantes, and he recommended him to join Father Joubert of the Company of Jesus, who was then conducting a mission at Saint-Similien. De Montfort threw himself vigorously into the work, and soon his efforts appeared almost supernaturally successful.

We are told that many wonderful events attended his preaching, and amongst the rest it is related that a young lady of great piety came early one morning to Saint-Similien to hear De Montfort. She was so attracted by his discourse that she was at length overcome with weakness resulting from want of food. She reached the outside of the church, where she sat down upon a stone near the door. She had hardly done so when a lady whom she did not know approached and offered her some bread, and then disappeared. She tasted it and it was so delicious that she ate it and found herself quite restored to strength and able to return to the feet of the holy man who had so wonderfully drawn her to him. She had, no doubt,

been permitted to eat of the Bread of Angels, given by the hands of her to whom Blessed De Montfort ascribed all the success of his wonder-working missions.

About ten leagues from Nantes there is a small town called Pontchâteau, which was destined to become the scene of De Montfort's most signal triumphs and also of his most bitter humiliation. Some time about the end of the year 1709 he had concluded a series of small missions, all eminently successful and fruitful in their results. The last of these consoling events took place at Pontchâteau, and he was encouraged by the fervour of his congregation and the help of his brother-priests to put into practice an idea long formed in his mind and full of appeal to the sympathies and pious longings of a devout people. It was nothing less than the erection of an immense Calvary which, rising from the vast plain that surrounds Pontchâteau, would be visible for miles around, and would thus be a constant reminder to the inhabitants of the great tragedy of our Lord's passion and death, as well as a source of encouragement to persevere in the resolutions they had formed at the end of the retreat.

After consulting with his colleagues, he announced his design in the pulpit, and the project was at once enthusiastically taken up. Five hundred labourers volunteered their services, and every day witnessed an increasing number of willing workers. An elaborate system of trenches,

terraces and artificial hillocks was devised, all leading up to the mount representing in every detail the original Calvary, which was surmounted with three glittering crosses of the Suffering Redeemer and the two thieves. The figure of Christ, which is of wood and is still preserved, was five feet three inches high. The cross itself was fifty feet high, of a red colour. On one side of the entrance to the platform was placed a brazen serpent, recalling the healing effects wrought on the Israelites of old, and on the other was a realistic representation of the "Ecce Homo." To the pillars which enclosed the Calvary was attached an immense rosary, that, hanging from pillar to pillar, formed a fitting framework of the representation. Upon the lower terrace De Montfort planted a hundred and fifty fir trees with fifteen cypresses at regular intervals, so that pilgrims, by making the circuit of the hill and following the trees in order, could without distraction or difficulty recite the whole Rosary of fifteen decades.

This wonderful erection and its suggestive surroundings, all planned by the patient missionary, became a centre of piety as well as a noted landmark for the whole country. Men came from all parts to view the work, and to admire the zeal that had raised in their midst such an eloquent memorial of the salvation of the human race. The people of the neighbourhood were justly proud of their share in the glorious undertaking, and all began to look forward to the completion, which

was to be signalized by a unique and touching ceremonial.

De Montfort had, with a happy foresight, selected the Feast of the Holy Cross for this event, and preparations were made to celebrate the inauguration of the monument of patient skill and devotion with all possible pomp and splendour. Four preachers were appointed to address the multitude from the four sides of the elevation, so that everyone might hear the word of God. People came from all directions, and on the approach of the Feast the town of Pontchâteau, as well as the neighbouring villages, could scarcely accommodate the number of strangers attracted by the novelty and impressiveness of the celebration.

On the eve of the day selected great crowds had already gathered at the foot of the hill, which assumed the appearance of a vast encampment. De Montfort was everywhere, completing the preparations, arranging the details, and exhorting the people to preserve order. Expectation ran high, and bright anticipations of the morrow's memorable function were shared in by all who had witnessed the long and laborious process of erection. Suddenly a shadow fell across the upturned faces of the multitude. A rumour gradually spread that the Bishop of the diocese had forbidden any further steps to be taken. The amazed masses of the people could scarcely believe the report, and soon the Blessed de Montfort was besieged by crowds of eager questioners. His saddened

countenance and downcast demeanour soon confirmed the truth of the statement. At four o'clock in the evening there arrived a special message from the Bishop prohibiting the ceremony. Montfort immediately determined to go to Nantes and appeal personally to his Lordship, but returned next morning without having achieved any success. The people, notwithstanding, had all assembled at the Calvary, and, with the exception of the blessing, which was to have crowned the work, everything took place as had been arranged.

Our Saint saw in this great mortification the work of the Jansenists. They were ever on the alert to misrepresent and to distort the different actions of his life so as to bring about his downfall. In this case letters were written to his superiors painting him in the darkest colours, describing him as an ambitious demagogue who drew after him thousands of ignorant followers, and under the guise of a Calvary had erected a fortress surrounded by moats and pierced by subterranean passages in which the "enemy" could fortify himself in case of an invasion. These extraordinary and malicious inventions were even made known to the civil court, and, strange to say, were believed by the authorities, who at once resolved that this dangerous erection should be destroyed. Four or five hundred labourers from the district were ordered to attend on a certain day with their implements of work. When they were told that they should proceed to remove the mound which

they themselves had laboured to erect, and which was holy in their eyes, they declared that they would never be guilty of the desecration required of them. Threats and promises were alike indifferent to them, and it was only when the commander who had charge of the execution of the official decree of the Government decided that the cross should be sawn down that, fearing injury to the figure of Christ, they vied with each other in detaching it from the wood. Under compulsion the work of demolition proceeded slowly and with difficulty. It was only after three months' hard labour that the once famous Calvary was levelled and the trenches filled up.

De Montfort received this great humiliation with his wonted resignation. "God be blessed," he said, "I have not sought my own glory but His. I hope to obtain the same reward as if I was successful." And then moved by the prophetic spirit, it is related that he foretold "that this great work, so cruelly and so ignominiously ended, would be restored, that a new Calvary would rise again on the site of the old erection." History recounts the fulfilment of this prediction, which came to pass, once in 1747, and again in September, 1825, when a multitude numbering twenty thousand pilgrims surrounded the hill bearing white standards, and marshalled in a grand procession, thus making a glorious reparation for the outrage that had been offered to the emblems of the Saviour's Passion and Death. This was not the only way

in which God was pleased to reveal the glory of His servant, as it has been attested upon evidence, judicially examined and worthy of faith, that upwards of two hundred persons in this sanctuary obtained remarkable graces and miraculous cures by the intercession of De Montfort.

CHAPTER XII

DE MONTFORT'S EXPERIENCES IN NANTES

SADDENED, but not dejected, De Montfort took his departure from the place that had been so full of joy and sorrow to his loving heart, and retired to his friends the Jesuits in Nantes, in whose house he remained for a time after a retreat of eight days. He gradually resumed his works of charity and zeal in a quiet and unostentatious way. He laid the foundation of an hospice, which soon became a shelter for the poor hitherto wandering through the streets of the city. He also established an association under the title of the Friends of the Cross, for whose members he drew up a code of rules admirably adapted to encourage them in devotion to the Passion and the practice of good works.

About this time took place an extraordinary inundation caused by the overflow of the Loire. Some of the most thickly populated quarters of the city were submerged, and the inhabitants were obliged to take refuge on the roofs of their houses. The rush of waters bore down every resistance. Trunks of trees and large masses of ice were carried along on the surface of the stream. No boatmen could be induced to venture to the relief

of the crowd of suffering humanity who were imprisoned by the mighty flood, and who were assailed by hunger, thirst, and cold. It seemed that all would perish, when De Montfort suddenly appeared on the scene. He jumped into a boat and pulled out courageously into the river. Standing up, he spoke to the timid boatmen who still hung back. He raised his hand upwards and with the calm confidence and inspiration of a saint he exclaimed, "Have courage, follow me. You will not lose your lives." At these words all hesitation vanished, ten boats were manned by volunteers and followed De Montfort, who bravely led the way. On through the waste of waters, fearless of the treacherous currents that ever threatened to swamp their fragile skiffs, the brave crews struggled with eyes fixed on their inspired guide and protector, who skilfully and cautiously piloted his little fleet until they all arrived safely at their destination, and succeeded in supplying the starving householders with the much-needed provisions with which the foresight of their leader had provided them.

Towards the end of March, 1711, De Montfort left Nantes to fulfil a promise he had made to an old friend, Monsignor de Champflour, who had asked him to give some missions in his diocese of La Rochelle. He had arranged to interrupt his journey to the latter place at the parish of Saint Hilaire-de-Loulai, in the diocese of Luçon, whose Curé had asked him to spend a short time

there in preaching to his people. The day was fixed, and De Montfort made his preparations to arrive in the evening, but in the meantime his enemies were at work, and had sent to the Curé an emissary who succeeded only too well in poisoning his mind and in filling his heart with contempt and dislike of the man whom he had asked to sanctify his parish.

When Montfort presented himself he got no welcome, and was told by his unkind host that he should look for shelter elsewhere than in his house. The hour was late and the missionary was weary and drenched with rain. He went to an inn, but was repulsed. He turned away, blessing God, and he had made up his mind to remain the whole night in the open air, without any shelter or refreshment, when a poor woman, seeing him pass by, asked him where he was going at so late an hour. "My good friend," answered Montfort, "I am looking for someone to take me in this night for the love of God." "I am poor enough," said the woman, "but I have still a little bread and some straw at your service; come in, I beg of you, with your companion." He gladly accepted the kind offer and passed a fairly comfortable night in the cabin of this good Samaritan, who thus made amends for the cruel conduct of her pastor. He resumed his journey to La Rochelle next day. Passing through Luçon he remained a few days at the Seminary, which was conducted by his old friends the Jesuits. It was while

celebrating Mass in the Chapel of the College that he was seen to remain half an hour as it were in ecstasy, and it needed some violence to recall him to himself.

CHAPTER XIII

DE MONTFORT'S MISSION IN LA ROCHELLE

RESTED and comforted by his stay at the Seminary, where he made a short retreat, De Montfort reached La Rochelle, which was destined to witness the most successful efforts of his life as a missionary. The Bishop had awaited his coming with joyful anticipation, and when he arrived, placed all his churches at his disposal and invited him to make his selection. He chose that of the Dominicans, not merely on account of its large size, but also no doubt from love of the religious of that name, to whom he was attached, both by his connexion with the Third Order of Penance and his particular devotion to St. Dominic.

La Rochelle had been in former times a stronghold of Protestantism, and although no longer remarkable for a tendency to heresy, it still contained a considerable number of those who had fallen away from the True Church.

Many, therefore, who had recognized his abilities as a theologian and controversialist saw in him a champion of the Faith and a gifted advocate who would confound error and enlighten its victims by his argumentative and convincing eloquence.

Instead, however, of entering into the fields of

controversy he took for his model the great saint to whom the church was dedicated, and, refraining from entering into questions of dogma and points of difference between the Church and the heretics, he explained the great truths of religion that were admitted by all, and like the great servant of Mary whose example he followed, he took advantage of the different divisions of his instructions to explain the Rosary and to exhort his hearers to practice its recitation and to meditate upon its mysteries. His confidence in the power of his mistress was not misplaced. He was often obliged to interrupt his discourse to beg his hearers to moderate their cries. Many of the hardened heretics were moved to sorrow for their apostasy, and those who had been hitherto, as it were, deaf and dumb and blind, and bound fast in the shackles of a dreary and repellent worship, abjured their false doctrines and became docile children of the True Church.

He closed his missions at La Rochelle by the erection of two crosses, one at the Porte St. Nicholas and the other at the Porte Dauphine. On the occasion of the latter ceremony the missionary stood at the foot of the cross and was just commencing to speak when suddenly a thousand voices from the crowd cried out, "A miracle! a miracle! We see crosses in the air!" "Neither M. de Montfort nor I," says M. des Bastièrs, "perceived anything, but more than a hundred persons, both ecclesiastics and laymen, all of them

worthy of belief, certified to me since then that they saw a great number of crosses in the air."

It can hardly be supposed that so many people would have conspired to utter these exclamations, or that these apparitions could be the work of imagination or the offspring of fancy. These marvels and the almost supernatural character of his work did not prevent him from earning the enmity of the Calvinists and of those whose scandals and disorders he denounced.

"One evening," says M. Basti rs, who relates many reminiscences of De Montfort's career, "as we were coming back from St. Louis, M. de Montfort wished to visit Sieur Adam, a sculptor, in order to examine some statues which he had ordered. He begged of me to accompany him as he did not know the place of his residence. The shortest way was through the Rue de la Rochelle, but when we arrived there he refused to pass through it, and we were obliged to retrace our steps and to make a long detour before we came to the house of Sieur Adam. When he left it, I asked him why he had refused to pass through the street which was the shortest way to the sculptors," "I do not know," he replied, "but when we were in front of that street my heart became as cold as ice, and I could not take a step forward."

This mystery was explained to him a few years afterwards. He says: "I was returning from Nantes to La Rochelle, in company with several gentlemen belonging to different towns. The last

night, at Poire-sous-Velluire, seven leagues from La Rochelle, as we had taken the boat down the river to Marans, several of these gentlemen did not go to bed, but retired after supper to a room upstairs. I myself was in another room below them, from which I easily heard all that they were saying. Their conversation turned upon De Montfort, and one of them related that at the time he was giving a mission at La Rochelle he and two of his friends had sought for a hundred occasions of meeting him by himself. 'We learned one day by accident,' he added, 'that he and Brother Mathurin were to go in the evening to the house of Adam the sculptor, and that he would pass through the Rue de la Rochelle. We went there at seven o'clock and waited for him until eleven, but he never came.' One of the company asked him what he would have done had M. De Montfort passed by. 'We would have broken his head.' 'And what would you have done with Brother Mathurin?' 'We would have sent him to the devil after his master.' "

This was not his only escape from death at the hands of his enemies. The Calvinists, exasperated by the number of defections from their ranks, brought about by the wonder-working effect of his preaching, conceived the base design of encompassing his removal from life, by insidiously mixing poison with the soup which was given to him after he had left the pulpit. After partaking of the dose he immediately felt its effects, and

although remedies were at once applied and his life preserved, his system became so weakened that the remainder of his days were spent in constant suffering. He however continued his labours in various parts of the diocese up to the month of February, 1712.

CHAPTER XIV

DE MONTFORT'S WORK IN LUÇON AND LA ROCHELLE —THE BEGINNING OF THE ASSOCIATION OF THE COMPANY OF MARY

THE BISHOP OF LUÇON, who had not forgotten his memorable experience of De Montfort's energetic efforts in reforming abuses in his diocese, sent him an urgent message to visit an island under his jurisdiction that appeared to be abandoned to irreligious practices and destitute of all spiritual aids. It was named the Isle-Dieu, and its title was sadly out of keeping with the character of its inhabitants, who had seemed to forsake everything pertaining to the worship of God. It lay on the north coast of France, five leagues from the mainland, and was isolated from all resources of civilization. The sea around was infested with pirates who spared no voyagers, and their name was quite sufficient to deter visitors from the shores of this God-forsaken portion of the Bishop's diocese. It was, therefore, with no little difficulty that boatmen were secured to bring the brave missionary and his companion across this dangerous piece of water.

When about half way, two pirate vessels were espied, apparently on the watch for them, and at

once they bore down upon the little vessel. Nearer they came, and the unfortunate boatmen gave themselves up for lost. De Montfort preserved an undisturbed calm, and appeared quite undismayed at the prospect of seizure. He commenced to sing a hymn, and when he found his companions overcome with fear and apparently unable to make an effort to avoid the danger which now appeared inevitable, as their pursuers were rapidly gaining upon them, he said, "As you will not sing with me, at least let us recite the Rosary together." They did so, and when they concluded he said, "Fear nothing, my dear friends, our good Mother has heard us. We are out of danger." "Ah!" said they, "how can that be? The boats are closing on us and we shall be all sent to prison." "Have faith," he replied, "the wind will change," and at once a breeze sprang up, their sails were filled, and gradually they increased their distance from their baffled enemies until they entirely disappeared from view. Heartily they joined their protector in a joyous *Magnificat* in honour of the Queen of Heaven, who had not refused to listen to the prayer of her servant. Thus, with the special protection of Providence, the apostle of peace arrived on the shores of the island, and the account of his escape under such marvellous intervention was spread abroad, convincing the people that no ordinary minister had come to preach the Word of God to them, and preparing them to give a cordial reception to him and his companion.

A happy and successful mission was the result, and, with the exception of the Governor and a small coterie of his officials, all the inhabitants zealously profited by those days of grace that came to them with a message of salvation and joy to which they were hitherto strangers, and the curé who had charge of the parish was consoled and edified beyond measure at the wondrous change which was effected in his congregation.

On the 11th June of this year, shortly after the conversion of the Isle-Dieu, De Montfort opened a mission at St. Christophe. Here, as hitherto happened, marvellous results attended his efforts. Amongst those who were drawn by the winning personality of the gracious apostle was a man who had become wealthy by avarice and usury, and who had given great scandal to the people. As the unfortunate man evinced a desire to share in the grace of the mission, Montfort received him kindly, and after some conversation required him, as a proof of his sincerity and his desire to make amends for the past, to burn certain usurious contracts in the presence of witnesses. The man consented, and on a certain day appointed, when the priest and witnesses came to his house, was proceeding to fulfil his promise, when his wife appeared, and in spite of the remonstrances of the holy man, dissuaded her unhappy husband from making the sacrifice and even mocked him who had come as a messenger of peace and reform.

Montfort then said to them : " You are attached

to the goods of earth, you despise those of heaven. Well, then, your children will not prosper, they will have no offspring. You yourselves will die poor ; you will not have sufficient to pay for your burial." " Oh ! " replied the woman, " we shall always have thirty sous to pay for the tolling of the bell." " And I tell you," said he, " that no bell shall toll at your funeral."

All these predictions came to pass, and were attested by the inhabitants. This unfortunate couple had two children, who married and died childless. The parents left them nothing but debts, and both were buried on Good Friday, when bells are never rung—the mother in 1730, and the father in 1738. Another striking instance of our saint's supernatural gifts is well authenticated. He was very intimate with a sacristan named Cautin. One day he called at Cautin's house and found his daughter busily engaged in baking. He asked her whether she was always faithful in offering her work to God, and she candidly replied that sometimes she failed in this respect. He said to her, " Never fail to do this." Kneeling down he blessed the flour, and then went away. When the time had come to place the dough in the oven the mother told the girl to form it into loaves and bring it to her. When the oven was almost filled she asked if there were any more loaves. " You have not yet come to the end," replied the daughter, " there still remain as many more as you have put into the oven." The woman

thought her child was only giving her a playful answer, but what was her astonishment when she saw that there really remained as much dough as would be sufficient to twice fill the oven, although the kneading trough could only contain flour enough for one baking.

There were great fears that the cross that had been erected at the close of this eventful mission of Saint Christophe might be too weak to resist the force of the wind. "Never fear," said Montfort, as he concluded his sermon on the occasion of the erection. "Never fear that this cross will fall. It will last until another mission is given in this parish. Then it will fall down, to give place to one which will be raised on the same spot." And so it turned out. The cross endured the elements until 1735, when the holy man's successors came to give a second mission at Saint Christophe. As they were deliberating where to plant the new cross the old one was suddenly blown down by a whirlwind, and thus they were reminded of De Montfort's words, which were verified in a startling and significant manner.

After spending five months in profitable and zealous missionary work in the diocese of Luçon, De Montfort returned to his friend the Bishop of La Rochelle, and when he had taken a short rest he commenced giving a retreat at the Hospital-General, during which an immense crowd availed themselves of the public exercises.

Amongst the latter was a young lady named

Bénigne Pagé, daughter of one of the treasurers of France. One day, in a spirit of mischief, she arranged with some of her giddy friends to attend the mission, and, if possible, to distract the conductor by causing him to make some mistake which would excite laughter.

Having dressed herself in the most fashionable style, she took up a position immediately in front of the preacher. He noticed her as soon as he entered the pulpit, but he contented himself with turning on her a look of compassion, and kneeling for a short time before the Blessed Sacrament, doubtless to recommend this misguided soul to our Lord, he immediately commenced his sermon. In a short time the whole of the congregation were moved to tears, and amongst the rest the young woman who came to mock but was forced to pray. When the preacher concluded she waited in the church and, declining the importunities of her friends, sought an interview with De Montfort. She remained nearly two hours in consultation with him, and on her return to her house passed the night in settling her affairs. She dismissed her servants, and next morning sought admittance to the Convent of the Sisters of St. Clare, where she dwelt for the remainder of her life a perfect model of penitence and religious fervour.

For many years had De Montfort dreamed of organizing a society of priests who would continue

to work in his spirit and according to his method when God would call him away. Thus he sung :

.
" Prêtres allons à la suite,
D'un Dieu pauvre et mort en croix,
Puisqu'il nous en sollicite,
Prêtons l'oreille à sa voix."

Now that to his foreseeing vision the coming shadows of death seemed to darken his path, he considered that the time had come to put his scheme into execution. He first, however, resolved to communicate his ideas on the subject to the Bishop of La Rochelle, and to be guided by his decision.

The holy prelate examined carefully the details submitted to him by his zealous friend and gave them his unqualified approbation. The manuscript which contained them is still fortunately preserved, written entirely in De Montfort's own handwriting, and manifesting the inspiration of a saint and a prophet. He declared that the body of priests would be placed under the all-powerful protection of the Blessed Virgin, and that they should specially be obliged to have a constant devotion to her. He required in them no ordinary perfection, such as indeed is to be met with amongst the simple faithful, or even such as exists amongst the religious and ecclesiastics. His desire was to have true apostles with their whole heart in their work, detached from every object, and

ready to fly like a body of light troops at the good-will and pleasure of the Bishop wherever they would be called for the salvation of souls.

Assured of their existence, which he foresaw beyond the grave, he spoke of them with enthusiasm and addressed them as if he had already seen them filled with the love of God and waging relentless war against the common enemy.

CHAPTER XV

DE MONTFORT'S SEARCH FOR SUBJECTS FOR HIS
COMPANY OF MARY—HIS SERIOUS ILLNESS
AND WONDERFUL RECOVERY—HIS VISIT TO
M. BLAIN.

THE rule of life for his association was now complete and approved of by his superiors. Subjects alone were wanting, and he determined to take advantage of the vacation of the year 1713 to make a journey to Paris to seek those whom Providence might select to be the vanguard and the pioneers of the new movement.

His first application was made at the Community of the St. Esprit, which had been formed some years before by a countryman and school-fellow of his own, the Abbé Desplaces, who, however, was taken away by a premature death, but whose successor, M. Bovie, was now in charge, and was eminently adapted to carry out the designs of the holy founder.

De Montfort happened to call during the hour of recreation and experienced a cordial and respectful greeting from all. Having returned their salutations in his own modest and humble way, he went straight to one of the ecclesiastics who was more poorly clad than the rest and embraced

him, with no other apparent motive for this distinction than his respect for the livery of poverty. He stayed for some days at the College and seized every opportunity to broach the subject so near to his heart and to communicate his ideas with regard to his future society, to be later known as the Company of Mary. One day when a number of the young men were around him, he asked them upon which of them he should cast the lot of joining him in his project. Turning slowly round and looking earnestly at each, one after the other, as if he would read their inmost souls, he took off the hat of one named Vatel, and placing his own upon his head he said, "Upon him, he is good ; he belongs to me and I shall have him." Perhaps no one was more surprised than Vatel at his selection than himself. He had been only two years in the Seminary, whose inmates he had edified by his fervour and humility, and although he had not hitherto formed any plans as to his future, he recognized in the action of De Montfort an indication of God's will in his regard, and from that moment prepared himself silently and earnestly to fit himself for the calling thus mysteriously foreshadowed. He was destined to be the first and the only member of this distinguished company that worked with its saintly founder, as the others of his confrères, Thomas Hédan and Le Valois, only joined when Montfort had passed away.

Henceforth the holy man had no misgivings as to his beloved association. The seed had been

sown in a good soil, and coming years saw it blossom into a spreading tree, whose branches extended to all parts of France, and later to Europe, and even to far Canada.

He soon returned to La Rochelle, and in the autumn of 1713 he resumed his missions, but was obliged to give them up owing to a sudden illness, which gradually assumed a serious form, and threatened to terminate with fatal results. He was not, however, alarmed, and he told his companions that it was a usual experience every year at the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross to receive at the hands of his Good Master some share in His suffering. He was removed to the Hospital of La Rochelle, where he felt consoled at taking his place among God's poor and afflicted children. A large abscess had formed on his body causing continual fever and torment. Cruel operations were repeated every second day. There were none of the present-day resources of science to deaden pain and to soothe suffering, and yet he never betrayed any indications of the agony he endured. When his physicians were attending him he displayed the greatest patience and resignation, and even sang his favourite hymn :—

“Vive Jésus ! Vive sa croix !

N'est il pas bien jusqu'on l'aimé ? ”

For two long months he lingered between life and death, and his friends were preparing for the worst when a change came, a slight improvement

gradually developing into a recuperation that appeared marvellous, and that enabled him once more to resume his courses of instruction. In the beginning of March, 1714, an invitation reached him from the Curé of Vanneau, in the diocese of Saintes, to give a mission there. On its conclusion he laboured in different parts of his adopted diocese of La Rochelle with his wonted energy and success up to July, when he went to Rennes for a retreat of eight days. From thence he proceeded to Avranches, where he arrived late in the evening of the 14th August. When, next morning, he presented himself to the Bishop and asked for permission to celebrate Mass, he met with a very unfavourable reception. It seems that, a short time previous to his arrival, two impostors had been allowed to officiate with forged certificates, and that the supervision over credentials of strange priests had become very stringent. Hence, although De Montfort's papers were in perfect order and bore the signatures of the Bishop of Nantes and of La Rochelle, he was refused permission to say Mass and was ordered to leave the town without delay. He received this dismissal with cheerful humility and felt no disappointment save the denial of the opportunity to celebrate the Feast of the Assumption. He was not however discouraged, but hiring a horse he rode to the village of Ville-Dieu, which was situated in another diocese. He reached there shortly before mid-day and had no difficulty in obtaining permission to offer the

Holy Mysteries in the church. Consoled and thankful, he resumed his journey in the direction of Saint Lô, where he was induced by the parish priest to conduct a retreat that in a short time assumed the form of a mission, to which enormous crowds hastened, anxious to listen to a stranger who had mysteriously and suddenly appeared amongst them, and like another St. John warned them "to make straight the way of the Lord, and to prepare His path," by preaching penance and the coming of God's Kingdom.

Forty years after this memorable event in Saint Lô, the pastor who had invited him, the Venerable Father Le François, gave publicity to the following testimony of the results of De Montfort's labours: "It would be impossible for me to relate all the good which he did at Saint Lô, the conversions he wrought, and the heroic acts which he practised, and of which I myself was a witness. He knew so well how to make piety appreciated that a number of persons who are still living a holy life are the ever-abiding fruit of his preaching. So well did he preach the Rosary that the custom of publicly reciting it has been every day observed."

Finding himself in Saint Lô, not far from Rouen, De Montfort determined to put into execution a design he had long contemplated of visiting his old and valued friend M. Blain. He accordingly sent him a letter in which he requested the latter to meet him at Caen, as he had only a short time at his disposal to interrupt his journey. M. Blain

replied urging him to come on to Rouen. De Montfort consented, and set out at once for that city with a chain round his body and circles of iron on his arms. He arrived so changed and exhausted that his friend judged him to be not far from his end.

M. Blain has left a record of this momentous visit and of its effects upon the lives of both, that sets forth in vivid colours the sublime character and the spirit of prophecy that animated De Montfort. He tells us that he (M. Blain) candidly objected to the lofty ideal formed by De Montfort in his conception of the body of ecclesiastics who were to join the Company of Mary. "I asked him," he says, "whether he ever hoped to find men who would consent to follow him in the life which he was leading, a life so poor, so hard, so abandoned to Providence, and so much in need of men of rare strength and virtue that it would be rashness to attempt it. I assured him that if he wished to associate other ecclesiastics with himself in his designs and labours, he must either relax the rigour of his rule and tone down the sublimity of his practices of perfection in order to conform to their weakness, and to condescend to their ordinary kind of life, or raise them to his own standard by the infusion of his own grace and perfect dispositions.

"He replied by producing his copy of the New Testament and by asking me if I could teach over again in any better way what Jesus Christ had

taught, and if I could show him a life more resembling that of our Blessed Lord and His Apostles than one which was poor, mortified, and founded on resignation to Providence, that he had no other object but to follow it and no other design but to persevere in it."

M. Blain made some other objections which he thought were unanswerable, but he was forced to admit that the replies were so just, so concise, and so full of the spirit of God, that he gave up the task as useless and consulted the holy man upon a matter that was then giving him some anxiety, with regard to a benefice in the city of Rouen which was offered to him. M. de Montfort replied at once without any hesitation, " You will accept it, you will have many crosses, and you will leave it." All these assertions were verified one by one.

M. Blain continues : " This is the second prediction which he had made to me in very clear terms with reference to subjects that he could only know by the light of Heaven. In the conversation which we had together afterwards, he confessed to me that God had favoured him with a very special grace, which was *the abiding presence of Jesus and Mary in the depth of his soul*. I had difficulty in understanding so high a favour, but I did not wish to ask him for an explanation, and perhaps he could not himself have given it, for in the mystical life there are operations of grace that are inexplicable even to the souls which are favoured with them."

CHAPTER XVI

DE MONTFORT'S JOURNEY FROM ROUEN TO NANTES —HIS RETURN TO LA ROCHELLE

DE MONTFORT made a short stay with his esteemed host. He was anxious to resume his journey, so often and so providentially interrupted, and took advantage of the departure of a boat which was starting for Nantes to embark for that city. Its name was "La Bouille," and M. Blain says, "It was a perfect Noah's ark filled with all kinds of animals, and laden with two hundred passengers. Hardly had the missionary gone on board than he knelt down, and taking in his hand his large rosary, he exhorted his fellow-passengers to say it with him. The kneeling position of the priest and his invitation to join him in prayer seemed to cause ridicule in the minds of those who looked upon the proposal as a subject of laughter.

He was, however, undisturbed, and continued to kneel and pray, allowing the company to amuse themselves at his expense, no doubt offering the humiliation to God, and thankful for the cross. When he had finished the recitation he began again, and invited them a second time, amidst renewed expressions of contempt.

A third time he made the proposal for prayer,

already twice disdainfully rejected, and he accompanied his request with a look and gesture so full of the spirit of God that the mockers became silent and all knelt down and joined him in the recital of the entire Rosary of fifteen decades, and afterwards gave respectful and willing attention to the instructions he gave, and their changed demeanour continued until they left the boat. "This fact," M. de Blain says, "was related to me by one who was present. Those who knew what those boats are and the kind of people ordinarily found on board, will look upon this event as a miracle in the order of grace."

Having at length reached Nantes, he went directly to the little Hospital for Incurables which he had established there, and spent the short time that remained, before resuming his indefatigable labours, in doing good, consoling, directing and converting all that crowded to him.

As the date for resuming his missions in La Rochelle drew near, he directed his steps homewards. He expected, perhaps hoped, to find his path there strewn with crosses, as heretofore, but he was on this occasion grievously disappointed. When passing through places that had witnessed his labours he was treated by the people with every token of respect and joy. They crowded around to get his blessing, and when they parted from him they mourned over him, as did the faithful of Ephesus lament when they took leave of St. Paul for the last time, since they had a

premonition that they would see his face no more.

The first care that claimed his attention on his arrival at La Rochelle was the establishment of schools, much needed in that district, and he set about the task with an earnestness and tact that soon brought about wondrous results, and secured for the ignorant classes an education that raised them from their lowly state of darkness to a knowledge of the Christian truths, that disposed them for the fruitful reception of the Sacraments, which were now frequently administered.

This important and salutary occupation did not hinder the work of his ministry and the direction of souls. He was continually besieged by all classes of society, who came to lay their spiritual affairs before him and obtain his decision on various difficulties of conscience.

One day, as he was preaching in the Church of the Dominicans on 2nd February, the Feast of the Purification, he burst into words of glowing rapture on the grandeur of Mary. Suddenly his countenance, worn out and attenuated by mortification, became marvellously illuminated, rays of glory seemed to go out from it, and his face became so changed that his friends, even though quite near, were unable to recognize him, except by his voice.

This transfiguration so deeply impressed those who were present, and inspired them with such awe and reverence for the preacher, that, instead of

leaving after the sermon, they all remained for the Mass he celebrated, convinced that a saint and a prophet was in their midst, and that Mary had thus caused to be glorified, even in this life, the servant who had worked and suffered for her and who had shown her forth as the *Lumen ad revelationem gentium*.

Another striking proof of the supernatural character of De Montfort's apostleship was given at a mission he was conducting at Saint-Amand, a small town at present in the diocese of Poitiers. One day, when the congregation was so large that the church could not contain it, he ordered the pulpit to be placed at the foot of a large tree, and as the crowd in his immediate vicinity began to press closely around him he said, "Do not crush, my dear brethren, God has given me the grace to command the attention of the whole of my audience ; stay all of you just where you are, and you will be able to hear me quite distinctly." Thus it came to pass that those who were on the outskirts of the crowd, where naturally they could not hear him, never lost a word of his discourse.

CHAPTER XVII

DE MONTFORT ESTABLISHES THE CONGREGATION OF THE DAUGHTERS OF WISDOM

ONE of the great works which, like many other of his undertakings, was destined to be widely known and fully appreciated only long after his death, was the establishment of the Association of the Daughters of Wisdom. He had long before this time made a commencement of this project when he was in Poitiers, and he selected for the Superior of the new Congregation a young lady named Mademoiselle Trichet, who afterwards was known in religion as Sister Marie Louise of Jesus. He had carefully trained her in all Christian virtues, and when under his direction and at his hands she received the habit of religion on the Feast of the Purification, 1703, he seemed to foresee that she was called to fill a position to which he had long looked forward as full of glorious promise for the future of the association.

Now the time had come to put his plans into execution, and at once he wrote to Sister Marie Louise to make every arrangement for leaving Poitiers at the end of six months.

In the meantime he was busily engaged in preparing a school for boys, which he opened in

the spring of the year 1715, and placed under the direction of three masters, one of whom was a priest specially entrusted with the spiritual welfare of the children.

He then found himself free to direct his attention to the instruction of the girls, and as the six months' notice which he gave to Sister Marie Louise in Poitiers was near its termination, he sent her word to set out for La Rochelle. She had some difficulties in making her final arrangements, principally owing to the opposition of her mother, and the hesitation of the directors of the Hospital to allow her to leave a place in which she had become almost a necessary ruler and guide, but the voice of God called her in the summons of her father and friend, and she set out on her long journey, accompanied by one companion, Sister Marie of the Conception.

De Montfort met them at a country house, called "Petit-Plessis," a quarter of a mile from La Rochelle. His greeting was significant and prophetic: "It is you, my daughter, whom God has chosen to be the head of this little community which has just been born. In the letter which I wrote to you in common I signified to you, by naming you Mother Superioress, that it was the Will of God Who would have it so. You have need of great firmness, but gentleness must prevail over anything else. Look, my daughter. Look at the poor hen with her chickens under her wings, with what attention she takes care of them, with

what tenderness she loves them. Well, then, it is thus you must act and behave towards all the daughters whose mother you shall henceforth become."

On leaving Petit-Plessis for La Rochelle, Montfort reminded the sister of what he had said to her on leaving the Hospital of Poitiers that, "if there were no Daughters of Wisdom for ten years to come, God's Will would be accomplished." He added: "Count up now, and you will see that ten years have passed since I told you that." As she could not help telling him her fears on the subject of the Hospital of Poitiers, he, without hesitation, rejoined: "Console yourself, all is not lost for the Hospital of Poitiers. They will ask for you again, *and you will return and remain there.*" And so it happened, for in 1748, thirty-three years after this saying, she returned with five of her spiritual daughters to take up work in the Hospital of Poitiers, where she stayed until her death.

De Montfort did not fail to complete the establishment of this society, afterwards so widely known as the Daughters of Wisdom. He busied himself in providing for their wants, in equipping their schools with the necessary outfit for teaching and organization, in securing new subjects for their community, in instructing them in the duties of their state, and in perfecting what he had drawn up for them, and which was pronounced by the eminent ecclesiastics to whom it was previously submitted as a masterpiece of wisdom and piety.

He took advantage of the short time at his disposal before commencing his missions to admonish them of the difficulties before them. In one of those discourses he suddenly stopped, transported out of himself, and his countenance became again transfigured. "My daughter," he said, "God is showing me wonderful things. I see in His secrets a nursery of the Daughters of Wisdom." The wonderful progress of the Association in after-years and in the present day has amply fulfilled his words.

He parted from them late in the year, never to meet them again in this world, and on the 31st December he sent them the following characteristic New Year's Greeting: "I wish you a year full of combats and victories, of poverty and contempt."

CHAPTER XVIII

BLESSED DE MONTFORT COMPLETES HIS ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF THE COMPANY OF MARY

HAVING placed on a permanent footing the Association of the Daughters of Wisdom, that for ten years had been uppermost in his thoughts and prayers, De Montfort, warned of his approaching death, hastened to complete his plans regarding the Company of Mary, who were destined to consecrate their lives in carrying out the work of his missions according to his method and in his spirit when he would have passed away.

During the vacation of 1713 he had visited the Seminary of St. Esprit with the intention of selecting subjects for this Society. He had on that occasion, as already related, made choice of only one seminarist, named Vatel, who, although deeply impressed at the time, seemed to have put away all thoughts of following De Montfort, and to be inspired by the holy ambition of spreading the Faith in foreign lands. After his ordination, he made every preparation to carry out this laudable project, and was on the eve of embarking when, moved by some impulse of Divine Grace as he was passing the church of La Providence, in

La Rochelle, he entered for the purpose of asking the Divine Protection in his voyage.

Just as he knelt before the altar, De Montfort, who was conducting a mission in the church, entered the pulpit and commenced to preach. Suddenly he stopped. "There is here," he said, "some one who is resisting me; I feel that the Word of God comes back to me, but he shall not escape me." M. Vatel, who had been a critical and unsympathetic listener, felt that those words were directed to himself. When the sermon was over he went to pay his respects to the preacher. The latter happened, at the time, to be reading a letter from a priest who was excusing himself from joining him. "That is well," he said as he saw M. Vatel enter, "one priest breaks his word, here is another whom our good God sends me in his stead. You must come with me, sir, and we will labour together." M. Vatel replied that the thing was impossible, as he was on the eve of departure for the foreign missions.

Whereupon he communicated to De Montfort the uneasiness he felt as to the validity of his faculties in those distant parts. Montfort did not hesitate to give his decision, and proved to him that his mission was insufficient, and his faculties null. As he made use of this new motive to detain him, M. Vatel mentioned, as an additional objection, that he had already made an engagement with the captain of the vessel in which he was about to sail, who had advanced him a hundred

crowns. "That is, indeed, a great difficulty," replied Montfort, smiling, "Mgr. the Bishop of La Rochelle will repay him." Upon this they went together to call on the prelate, who decided the first difficulty in the same way that the missionary had done, and settled the second by taking from his writing-desk the hundred crowns which the captain had advanced. But the latter was not pleased. He bitterly complained that he had been deprived of his chaplain, and swore that he would kill Montfort wherever he might find him.

At this news the holy priest went in search of him, and calmly addressing him said, "Sir, I am told that you wish to take away my life. Here I am; I have come to offer it to you." Nothing more was required to pacify the captain. They embraced and parted good friends, and M. Vatel obediently followed De Montfort, took part in his missions, and became his first recruit in the army of the Company of Mary.

But now failing health and decreasing vigour admonished the holy man that besides this selection of the first soldier of his new army there was need to secure a general, one whose record for sanctity and missionary labour would fit him as a worthy successor in the office of Superior of the Company of Mary. There was then living in retirement in Saint Pompain, in the diocese of La Rochelle, a priest named M. Mulot.

He had been titular *vicaire* of Souilans, but he

broke down from constant labour, and found himself compelled to give up his charge, and to take up his residence with his brother, the curé of the parish. He was sent by the latter to Fontenay to beg the saintly missionary to come and employ his zeal at Saint Pompain. M. Mulot found him engaged in giving a retreat to the nuns of Notre Dame, and delivered his message. De Montfort excused himself on the grounds that he had several other engagements. However, as M. Mulot continued to press him he said, "Well, then, promise to labour with me for the rest of your days and to make your first trial at this mission that I am going to give at Vouvant. If you agree to this I will consent to go afterwards to Saint Pompain, but not otherwise." Mulot answered that he would be happy to follow him, but the weakness from which he suffered rendered it absolutely impossible. "Fear not," said the Man of God, "your illness will pass away as soon as you begin to labour for the salvation of souls."

M. Mulot no longer held back, as he felt it his duty to accompany De Montfort; and as he began to assist him in the ministry his weakness gradually disappeared, and he had no more misgivings as to his vocation.

Thus the man on whose shoulders would soon be placed the burden that already was weighing down his holy Superior, began a career full of important results to the progress of the Company of Mary.

CHAPTER XIX

DE MONTFORT'S MISSION IN SAINT POMPAIN

ABOUT the middle of December in this year (1715) De Montfort and his companions opened the mission of Saint Pompain as he had promised, and, after achieving many conquests in the constant fight against sin in that town, he went to Villiers-en-Plaine, about a league distant, on a similar errand of apostolic zeal.

In order to show the respect which is due to the Word of God his progress to this place was made in processional order, and he carried under a canopy a richly-bound copy of the Holy Bible.

At the erection of the Cross which took place on the occasion of the devotion of the Forty Hours, and which formed the close of the religious exercises, two strangers, a man and a woman, apparently under the influence of the dissipation caused by too free a participation in the excesses of the Carnival, interrupted the preacher with most insulting and irreligious language. De Montfort listened to them with head uncovered and hands joined, and when they had ceased speaking, he came down from the pulpit, threw himself upon his knees, and asked pardon aloud of those who had so grievously and gratuitously

insulted him, and prayed them to forgive him for whatever he might have said or done to cause them to offend God in this manner.

At this charitable and unexpected conduct of the missionary, they retired without a word, shamefaced and sorrowful.

Some days afterwards, De Montfort was invited by the wife of Seigneur De Villiers—the lord of the soil—to take some much-needed rest at their castle. This lady relates an instance of her experience of his sanctity which should find a place in every biography of the Blessed De Montfort. She says, “Seeing that the company assembled to meet him had retired to one of the apartments of the castle, he went into the garden. While there a servant passing by opened the door, and immediately shut it again. A moment afterwards he again opened it, seemed to look at something very attentively, and having again shut the door, went to the stable. I had observed this, as well as the look of astonishment which had appeared on his face. When the company had separated, and De Montfort himself had left the garden, I went in search of this servant. I found him seated on a box, with his arms crossed, as if he had lost all power over himself. He told me that he was in great fear, that he had seen M. De Montfort on his knees, with his arms extended in the form of a cross, in the avenue of the elms opposite the garden door, *and that he was raised more than two feet from the ground*; that he could not understand

how a man could kneel and not touch the ground ; but he thought that he had made a mistake the first time, that he had looked again, and that he was now quite sure he had not been deceived, because he had seen him the second time as well as the first without any support."

This same lady, who had benefited by his presence and preaching, assures us that when leaving her, in answer to her request to remember some trouble of hers in his prayers, he said : " Vive Dieu, Madame, I will ask God for it with so many vigils, fasts, and prayers, that He will grant it to me, *and I shall die before the year is ended.*" It was then the end of January, 1716, and he was called to his eternal reward on the 28th April of the same year.

As if forewarned that his days in this troubled life were now few, and that he would soon be dissolved, to rest with Christ, all his remaining energies were directed to the perfection of the organization of the Company of Mary, of those men who were to succeed him in making his loved Mother more known and more honoured than ever before, who were to be, in his own glowing words, a burning fire of the ministers of God, who shall kindle the flame of divine love everywhere, "*sicut sagittae in manu potentis,*" like sharp arrows in the hands of the powerful Mary to pierce her enemies. To secure this great object, which was the dream of his life, the throb of his heart, he was not satisfied with storming Heaven with earnest prayers, heroic mortifications, and fiery

darts of love. He resolved to enlist in his cause a band of priests and laymen who would go as pilgrims to the Shrine of Notre Dame des Ardilliers, and thus secure the patronage of the Queen of Heaven for the project which was so intimately connected with her glory.

Thirty-three men of Saint Pompain, whom he had formed into a Confraternity of Penitents, offered themselves for the good work, and he accepted their pious proposal. He placed at their head MM. Vatel and Mulot, the first two priests of the Company of Mary, and he provided them with a code of rules which dealt with every detail of their pilgrimage and raised it to a high level of praise and prayer.

It was faithfully observed by all, who made the journey on foot, bareheaded and recollected. During their absence, which lasted seven days, Montfort prepared himself by a fervent retreat to tread in their footsteps, and when they returned, consoled and refreshed by their spiritual exercises, he set out accompanied by some brothers, and succeeded, notwithstanding increasing feebleness and pain, in reaching Saumur.

There his soul overflowed with emotion, since he seemed to feel himself in the presence of his Queen, who would now take charge of his two beloved societies, the Daughters of Wisdom and the Company of Mary, who would shield them in their troubles, and in long years to come would make them valiant soldiers of Jesus and Mary to combat the world, the devil, and corrupted nature.

CHAPTER XX

HIS LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH

It was with a great effort that the Blessed De Montfort forced himself to leave this sanctuary, so full of consoling reminiscences and lofty associations, but the voice of duty called him, and he went to Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, there to open a mission on the 1st April, 1716. He chose for his dwelling-place a miserable garret, where for a bed he had some straw, and for furniture his instruments of penance. M. Mulot joined him, but his other fellow-worker, M. Vatel, was obliged to remain at Saint Pompain, to recover from his recent fatigue. The mission began on Palm Sunday, and De Montfort appeared in the procession that preceded Mass, bearing on his shoulders a large cross, his face lit up with holy joy, and his attenuated form bearing evidence of the suffering which he was enduring. His whole bearing was eloquently suggestive of the Passion that he came to preach.

Towards the middle of the month of April word was sent that the Bishop of La Rochelle was coming to make his visitation of the parish where the missionaries were labouring, and the preparation for this event necessitated additional exertion on those hard-working apostles.

De Montfort was suddenly attacked with a severe illness, which completely prostrated him, and he was unable to put in an appearance at the dinner given by the curé in honour of the Bishop.

Notwithstanding the serious nature of his collapse, and the necessity of taking every precaution to avoid a fatal termination, he once more ascended the pulpit, and, to the surprise of all who had seen him weak and struggling against the baffling attacks of a malignant disease, he addressed the crowded congregation with his usual vigour and animation. He spoke on the Sweetness of Jesus, and the subject and his treatment of it long lingered in the memories of his hearers, and reminded them of the farewell words spoken by the Saviour to His Apostles at the Last Supper and on the eve of His Crucifixion.¹

When he left the church all the energy and apparent strength he displayed suddenly deserted him, he tottered to his room and lay almost inanimate on the bed from which he was to rise no more. Remedies were applied, but proved unavailing. He was obliged to exchange his straw for a mattress, and thus prepared himself for the administration of the Last Sacraments, which he received with most intense fervour.

On the 27th April he made his will with all due formality, and with most minute directions regarding the few goods he possessed.

Having regulated his affairs, he concentrated his thoughts on death, now so near. He asked

that the little chains which he habitually wore, as indicative of his bondage, might be allowed to remain on his neck, arms, and feet, as he wished to die as he had lived—a *slave of Jesus and Mary*. In his right hand he held a crucifix to which the Pope had attached a plenary indulgence, and in his left was placed the little statue of the Blessed Virgin which he constantly carried about with him. His eyes were fixed upon those objects, and he kissed them often, calling upon the names of Jesus and Mary.

The room in which he lay dying was crowded by a number of people, sobbing bitterly, and begging of him to bless them before he departed. He did so with the crucifix. He made a last effort to console them, and even burst into song.

“ Allons, mes chers amis,
Allons en Paradis,
Quoi qu'on gagne en ces lieux
Le Paradis vaut mieux.”

The effort was too much, and he fell back in a swoon.

Waking up from apparent sleep, he began to tremble all over and exclaimed in a loud voice: “ It is in vain that you attack me, I am between Jesus and Mary. *Deo gratias et Mariæ*.

“ I have finished my course, it is over now, and I shall never sin again.”

At eight o'clock on that evening, 28th April, 1716, he breathed his last, and his soul was taken up to Jesus and Mary.

CHAPTER XXI

DE MONTFORT'S PERSONALITY—HIS DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT AND TO MARY HIS MOTHER

DE MONTFORT was above the average height. His constitution was naturally robust, but was weakened by continual austerities. His hair was of a chestnut brown, his face long, his forehead broad, his nose aquiline, his eyes large and expressive.

His manners were simple, and he was not very particular regarding his dress. He was gifted with talents of a high order. He had a taste for singing and composed several beautiful hymns, which he utilized at his missions with great success. He was well versed in theology, and his training under the Jesuits rendered him formidable to the propagandists of Jansenism, and brought upon him a persecution which lasted a lifetime and gave him many longed-for opportunities of suffering. His spirit of holy poverty was united to a confident dependence on God that made him heedless of taking ordinary precautions to preserve himself from starvation. Hence all his missions were gratuitous, and he left it as an obligation on his successors to observe the same disinterested rule. Some striking instances of this implicit confidence

in Divine Providence are given by his faithful follower, M. Bastiers :—

“ As it was ordinarily my duty to serve the poor at table, it happened five or six times that I had not a morsel of food to give them and that there was even none in the House of Providence, in which the missionaries lodged. On the first occasion I gave notice of this to M. De Montfort, who did not seem at all embarrassed and simply told me to take them to the accustomed place, and that God would provide for their wants. I executed his orders, not knowing from whence bread would come to us, except from Heaven. However, I made them sit down to table, having nothing to place before them, at which I felt very mortified, because there were nearly two hundred persons present who were waiting to see the poor people fed. Meanwhile, I had a book read to them for a short time, during which I went into the House of Providence, where I was much astonished to find a large quantity of bread and other provisions that had come I know not from where. I carried them immediately to our poor people who, that day, had double portions. A similar event occurred five or six other times to my knowledge.”

He never forgot the Presence of God, even in the most engrossing missionary duties. This habitual reverence for the all-seeing eye of Providence induced him to walk with head uncovered on his journeys, in heat or cold, sunshine or storm.

Sometimes, when he thought he was not perceived, he would prostrate himself on the middle of the road, with his face to the ground, in humble acknowledgment of God's favours.

It was, however, before the Blessed Sacrament that this spirit of self-effacement manifested itself. On his arrival in a parish to open a mission his first visit was to our Lord in the tabernacle. He never passed before a church without genuflecting, and if time allowed he would adore for an instant on both knees.

During the course of every mission he never failed to make an act of public reparation to the Blessed Sacrament, with a rope round his neck and a torch in his hand, and he concluded the exercises with a general procession, in which our Lord was carried in triumph and hailed with the fervent and glowing tributes of adoration expressed in his hymns.

After Jesus, the heart of De Montfort went out with all its affection to his Blessed Mother. "The love of Mary," says M. Blain, one of his fellow-labourers in the vineyard of the Lord, "seemed to have been born with him." It would appear that this good Mother had selected him above all others to be her special servant, and from his very youth had filled his soul with a tenderness for her that grew with his years and rendered him one of the greatest advocates in her cause that the world has ever seen.

When a child, before her image, he appeared as

one completely lost to his surroundings, remaining for hours in prayer, claiming her protection, begging her to guard his innocence, and pledging himself to consecrate his life to her service. Well might he sing of her in after life :—

“ Marie est ma grande richesse,
 Et mon tout, auprès de Jésus,
 C'est mon bonheur, c'est ma tendresse,
 C'est le trésor de mes vertus.”

Thus it was that she who was “ exalted like a cedar of Libanus and a cypress tree on Mount Sion ” struck her roots down deep in his heart, and grew up, as she has grown up within the Church, silently and calmly, bearing fruit a thousandfold, and so every day and every hour of his life breathed an all-absorbing devotion to her. His early consecration to his Immaculate Mother at the foot of the altar in the Church of St. Sulpice, the little statue of his mistress which he constantly carried with him, the transfiguration of his face on the Feast of her Purification, and a thousand other incidents which crowded his short life, indicate the deep love for Mary that marked him out as her devoted slave.

These characteristics, eloquent as they are, as affording incontestible proofs of his devotion, are not the only grounds on which his claims as an apostle of his Queen of Hearts are based. They rest rather on the evidence of the supernatural that has been found in his writings, that for a

time were hidden from the sight of men, and mysteriously brought to light when God's Providence saw fit and his own predictions would be verified.¹ "I clearly foresee that raging brutes will come in fury to tear with their diabolical teeth this little writing, and him whom the Holy Ghost has made use of to write it, or at least to envelop it in the silence of a coffer, in order that it may not appear."

¹ *Treatise on True Devotion to Mary.*

CHAPTER XXII

DE MONTFORT'S "TREATISE ON TRUE DEVOTION TO MARY "

WHEN his bones had long been laid to rest, and when his spoken words had been forgotten, and men had ceased to mention his name, then suddenly, as by revelation, his real character shone forth from the gloom of centuries as a saint and a mystic, a prophet and a seer, who had been carried up by the Spirit of God to the foot of Mary's throne and had heard words there which it "is not granted to men to utter," and as one who, in the words of Father Faber, "comes forward, like another St. Vincent Ferrer, as if on the days bordering on the Last Judgment, and proclaims that he brings an authentic message from God about the greater honour and wider knowledge and prominent love of His Blessed Mother, and her connection with the second advent of her Son."¹

Looking with prophetic gaze through the years to come, he tells us that "in those latter times God will raise up mighty saints, servants, slaves, and children of Mary, who shall be a burning fire of the Ministers of God, who shall kindle the

¹ Father Faber's Preface to *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*.

fire of divine love everywhere, *sicut sagittae in manu potentis*, like sharp arrows in the hand of the powerful Mary, to pierce her enemies."

A biography of Blessed de Montfort would, therefore, be imperfect and misleading if some space were not given to those productions of his pen, the work of one who "writeth swiftly the good things uttered by his heart," and which contained a message of mighty import, meant not for his own times or his own people, but for those latter ages when men have grown cold in their homage to the Queen of Hearts.

The *Treatise on True Devotion to Mary*, which its blessed author declared would be diabolically enveloped in the silence of a coffer, was discovered by one of the priests of his Congregation in Saint Laurent-sur-Sèvre, the last scene of De Montfort's career, in the year 1842. It had remained there unnoticed and forgotten from the time of his death in 1716, an interval of one hundred and twenty-six years.

The existing Superior was able to attest the handwriting as that of the venerable founder of his Congregation, and the autograph was sent to Rome to be examined in the process of canonization, and on May 12th, 1853, it was, with other writings of De Montfort, declared "*to contain nothing contrary to faith nor morals, or any new doctrine contrary to the Church's common sentiment or practice.*"

In 1848, in a work published at Rome, and

dedicated to Pius IX, a Roman prelate, Mgr. Gentillucci, expressly recommends De Montfort's devotion of the Slavery of Jesus and Mary, as outlined in the hidden treatise, *to be the best*, if not *the most acceptable*, form of devotion to be observed by the clients of Our Lady.

This work was published with the approbation of the most illustrious Roman censors, one of whom was Canon P. Charles Vercellone, Professor of Divinity and ornament of the Barnabite Order, and under the auspices of Pius IX, who had given his affectionate blessing to the work as a pledge of the Divine favour. The learned author states that De Montfort's Devotion to the Blessed Virgin has nothing in common with other practices which have been carelessly and erroneously confounded with it, and which have been condemned by the Holy See.

It would seem that a special dispensation of Providence had arranged that the production of the inspired pen of Blessed de Montfort should fall into the hands of another, though later, advocate of real and solid devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and one eminently qualified to give practical effect to the teachings it contained.

Father Faber tells us that it was in the year 1846 or 1847 he first studied the life and spirit of the Blessed Grignon de Montfort. The impression left upon him then, glowing with the fervour and zeal of a soul just emancipated from the darkness of Anglicanism, was deep and

permanent, and probably contributed to a great extent to the chivalrous and outspoken defence of Our Lady's privilege that formed a charming feature in the treasury of devotional writings which he afterwards gave to the Catholic world.

To him we are indebted for the first English translation of the *Treatise on True Devotion*. In his Preface to it he says :—

“ I have translated the whole treatise myself, and have taken great pains with it, and have been scrupulously faithful. At the same time I would venture to warn the reader that one perusal will be very far from making him master of it. If I may dare to say, there is a growing feeling of something inspired about it, as we go on studying it ; and with that we cannot help experiencing, after repeated readings of it, that its novelty never appears to wear off, nor its fulness to be diminished, nor the fresh fragrance and sensible fire of its unction ever to abate.”

In the year 1892 Cardinal Vaughan, in a letter to the publishers of the translation just mentioned, says :—

“ I have recommended the work to the clergy of the diocese of Salford, and I distributed copies of it to the priests who attended the first Synod which was held in July last. *I should be glad to see it in the hands of every priest*, as experience has taught me the power of this most persuasive treatise in propagating a solid devotion to the Mother of God.”

CHAPTER XXIII

DE MONTFORT'S "TREATISE ON TRUE DEVOTION TO MARY" CONTINUED

It is well to understand that the practice advocated by Blessed de Montfort is not a mere habit of piety that can be taken off and resumed at stated times.

It is a *consecration*, constant and ungrudging, of ourselves and of all we possess to Mary, in order that we may belong entirely to her Son. Let its blessed author explain : " All other congregations, associations, and confraternities erected in honour of our Lord and His Holy Mother, which do so much good in Christendom, do not make us give everything without reserve. They only prescribe to their members certain practices and actions to satisfy their obligations. They leave them free for all other spiritual occupations. But this devotion makes us give to Jesus and Mary, without reserve, all our thoughts, words, and actions and sufferings, all the time of our life in such sort, that whatever we eat or drink, whether we do great actions or little ones, it is always true to say, that whatever we do, even without thinking of it, is by virtue of our offering, done for Jesus and Mary."

It is therefore termed a *true* devotion, not that

others are false, but because it places us in a *true* position before God, and is nothing more or less than a perfect renewal of the vows and promises made in the reception of holy baptism. It is a *simple* devotion, inasmuch as it demands no change of life, no sacrifice of duty, no addition to burdens already assumed.

It consists in giving ourselves entirely to Our Lady, in order to belong entirely to Jesus by her. We must give her (1) our body, with all its senses and members; (2) our soul, with all its powers; (3) the exterior goods of fortune, whether present or to come; (4) our interior and spiritual goods, which are our merits and virtues, and our good works, past, present and future.

The keynote of the whole system taught by De Montfort is found in the idea of *subjection* or *slavery* to Jesus in Mary, an expression startling and perhaps repellent to those who rejoice in the heaven-born gift of liberty as their proudest privilege, but quite in keeping with the profession of a humble and confiding Christian.

When the Church was young her saints and martyrs did not hesitate to proclaim this state of bondage as their greatest glory and most valued inheritance, as did St. Agatha, when she exclaimed to her tormentors, "The highest dignity on earth is to be the slave of Jesus Christ," and St. Maximus, asked by the pro-consul of Ephesus "Of what condition was he?" replied, "I am no freeman, but the bondsman of Christ."

The evidence of seven centuries goes to prove most convincingly that this selfsame spirit of servitude of love to Our Lady was fostered and encouraged in different ages and in various parts of Christendom long before this new apostle of Mary's reign appeared on earth. An exhaustive history of this " Saint Esclavage " was published in the seventeenth century by M. Boudon, known in France as " L'homme de Dieu Seul," in which he gave a detailed account of the different Popes who approved of the devotion, the theologians who examined its orthodoxy, and the thousands of persons who practised it. Amongst the first of these mention is made of St. Odilon, the Abbot of Cluny, who lived in the year 1040.

Cæsarius Bollandus tells of an illustrious Cavalier Vanteer de Birbac, who in 1500 consecrated himself to Mary. Father Simon de Roxas, of the Order of the Redemption of Captives, through the instance of Philip III, obtained from Gregory XV ample indulgence for those who thus served their Queen and Mother. Cardinal Peter Damilu relates that in 1036 the Blessed Marino, his brother, made himself a slave of the Blessed Virgin in the presence of his director. He put a rope round his neck, took the discipline, and laid on the altar a sum of money to mark his devotion and consecration to Our Lady, and he continued this pious observance so faithfully during his whole life that he deserved to be visited and consoled at his death by his good mistress, and to receive

from her lips the promise of Paradise in recompense for his services.

Father de Lois Rios, a distinguished Augustinian, composed a large volume entitled *Hierarchia Mariana*, in which the advantage and excellence of this pious state are treated at full length. It was established in the seventeenth century by the Theatin Fathers in Italy, Sicily, and Savoy, and was introduced into Poland by Father Stanislaus Phalacius, a Jesuit. Cornelius a Lapide, famed for his commentaries on the Scriptures, received a commission from several ecclesiastics to investigate its conformity with the doctrine of the Church, and pronounced a most favourable verdict in its behalf. The Jesuit Fathers, in the name of the Sodalists of Cologne, presented a short treatise on the Holy Slavery to the Duke Ferdinand of Bavaria, then Bishop of that city, who gave it his approbation and exhorted all the parish priests and religious in his diocese to promote its circulation in every way. Later on, Cardinal de Berulle, whose memory is revered through all France, was one of the most zealous in encouraging and spreading it in every part of the country. His efforts on its behalf brought upon him the persecution of ignorant and jealous critics, who accused him of introducing novelty and superstition into religion. He calmly faced them, and triumphantly refuted them in a book in which he showed that what they condemned was founded on the example of Jesus Christ, on the obligations

which we owe to Him, and on the vows which we have taken in holy baptism. Four centuries later, similar charges of pious extravagance were made against the writings of De Montfort, by no less a controversialist than Dr. Pusey, who, in his *Eirenicon*, quotes him and others as investing Our Lady with a power of "searching the reins and the hearts, which is the attribute of God alone."

Fortunately for the memory of those defenceless authors, and for the cause they pleaded, an answer was forthcoming from one who, of all men, was best fitted to measure swords with the wily disputant. In a letter, no less remarkable than the work of Pusey, to which it gave a refutation as historic as it was convincing, he pointed out that the expressions to which objection was taken were strung together, *not as they happened in the context of the authors*, but as they lay in his *book*.

"I have to observe that these strange words after all are but few in number out of the many passages you cite, that most of them exemplify what I said about the difficulty of determining the exact point where truth passes into error, and that they are all allowable in one sense or connexion. And so again certain statements may be true under circumstances, and in a particular time and place which are certainly false, and hence it may be very unfair in a controversialist to interpret by an English or foreign rule whatever

may have been asserted by a foreign or mediæval author."¹

Cardinal Newman then refers to Pusey's own expressions, sincere and reverential as they were, when he calls Mary the Mother of God, the Second Eve, and Mother of All Living, the Morning Star, the Mystical New Heaven, the Sceptre of Orthodoxy, and the All-undefiled Mother of Holiness.

It is well to observe that De Montfort seems to foresee these misconceptions and distortions, when, in the commencement of his famous *Treatise*, he thus defines his true position ² :—

“ Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, of all things. We labour not, as the Apostle says, except to render every man perfect in Jesus Christ. If then we establish the solid devotion to Our Lady, it is only to establish more perfectly the devotion to Jesus Christ, and to put forward an *easy* and *secure* means for finding Jesus Christ.”

The essence of the True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin consists principally, if not entirely, in the consecration of all that we have, and all that we are, to our Holy Mother.

Hence, if we live and act up to this spirit of renunciation, our entire life will be one uninterrupted act of homage.

Some may say : If we give to our Lord, through

¹ Letter addressed by the late Cardinal Newman to Dr. Pusey on the occasion of his *Eirenicon*, pp. 103, 104.

² *Treatise on True Devotion*, translated by Father Faber, pp. 38, 39.

the hands of His Mother, the value of all our good works, our prayers, our mortifications, and our alms, what are we to do for ourselves, and for the friends who have left us. De Montfort anticipates this difficulty when he writes: "A fervent and generous soul, who prizes the interests of God more than his own, who gives to Him all that he has without reserve so that he can do nothing more, who breathes only the glory and the reign of Jesus Christ, by His Holy Mother, and who makes an entire sacrifice of himself to bring it about, will this generous soul be more punished in the other world, because it has been more liberal and more disinterested than others? Far indeed will that be from the truth. It is towards that one that our Lord and His Holy Mother are most liberal in this world, and in the next, in the order of nature, grace and glory."

In the *Secret of Mary*, a production which seems to have been written first and afterwards incorporated in the *Treatise on True Devotion*, Blessed de Montfort states:—

"We also place, by this practice, our merits in the hands of the Most Holy Virgin; but for her to keep them, to augment them, to embellish them, because we cannot communicate one to another the merits of sanctifying grace, and still less those of glory; but we give her all our prayers and good works, so far as they are impetratory and satisfactory, to distribute, and apply them to whom she pleases; and if, after having thus consecrated

ourselves to the Holy Virgin, we desire to relieve some soul in Purgatory, to save some sinner, to help some of our friends by our prayers, our alms, our mortifications, or our sacrifices, we must ask it of her humbly, and leave everything to her good pleasure and determination, without knowing anything about it, being fully persuaded that the value of our actions being dispensed by the same hand, which God makes use of to distribute to us His graces and gifts, it cannot fail to be applied to His greater glory."

Again he tells us:—"A person who is thus voluntarily consecrated and sacrificed to Jesus Christ by Mary can no longer dispose of the value of any of his good actions. All he suffers, all he thinks, all the good he says or does, belong to Mary, in order that she may dispose of it according to the Will of her Son and His greatest glory, without, however, that dependence, *prejudicing in any way the obligations of the state in which we may be at present, or may be placed in for the future*; for example, without prejudicing the obligations of a priest, who by his office or otherwise ought to apply the satisfactory or impetratory value of the Holy Mass to some private person, for we make the offering of this devotion only *according to the Order of God, and the duties of our state*. It interferes with no duty, it requires no publicity, no outward mark, no special habit. Priests on the mission, nuns in their convents, men and women in their homes, toilers at their work, the

poor in their poverty, all can belong to the army of Slaves of Mary."¹

We thus give her (1) our body, with all its senses and members ; (2) our soul, with all its powers ; (3) the exterior goods of fortune, whether present or to come ; (4) our interior and spiritual goods, which are our merits and our virtues, and our good works, past, present, and future.

This twofold offering can easily be made each morning and is contained in the following prayer :—

" My Queen, my Mother, I give thee all myself, and to show my devotion to thee, I consecrate to thee this day my eyes, my ears, my mouth, my heart, myself, wholly and without reserve.

" I give myself entirely to Jesus, by delivering and consecrating to thee my body, my soul, my goods, both exterior and interior, leaving to thee the entire and full right of disposing of me without exception, and according to Thy good pleasure, and to the greater glory of God, in time and eternity."

This generous and self-effacing offering cannot go without its reward, since Mary will be the mother of our soul in proportion to its fidelity, she will nurse its growth in holiness, undertake its spiritual education, enlighten and strengthen it all at once, keep its merits safe, and write them with her own, and make it for time and eternity God's bondservant of love instead of the slave of

¹ *True Devotion to Mary* (Mrs. Maher), Catholic Truth publication.

terror and of Hell. Meanwhile, all our prayers will rise to God upon her wings, and gain power at her touch.¹

To timorous souls and to repentant sinners oppressed with the burden of past falls, fearful for the future, De Montfort brings in his True Devotion a message of hope and comfort. He bids them be of good heart, and he sings for them his joyous *chanson* of Mary's work in their souls :—

“ Elle me rend pure et fertile,
Par sa fécondité,
Elle me rend fort et docile
Par sa profonde humilité.”

This practice of the True Devotion is an easy way to God, since, as its author tells us, “ it is the way in which Jesus Christ Himself trod in coming to us, and in which there is no obstacle in arriving at Him. It is true that we can attain to divine union by other roads, but it is by many crosses. We must pass through dark nights, through combats, through strange agonies, through cruel thorns, and over frightful deserts. But by the path of Mary we proceed more gently and more tranquilly. We do find, it is true, great battles to fight, and great hardships to master, but that good Mother and Mistress makes herself so present and so near to her faithful servants, to enlighten them in their doubts and darkness, to strengthen them in their fears, and to sustain them

¹ “ Slaves of Love,” T. G. D., *Irish Rosary*, Aug., 1911.

in their difficulties, that in truth this virginal path to find Jesus Christ, is one of roses and honey compared to other ways."¹

The slavery that De Montfort advocated, and that Pusey criticized, is not opposed to the spirit of freedom with which God endowed us. There is a slavery of fear that comes from dread of punishment at the hands of men, and a bondage of the heart, a service of love given gladly to a Divine Master, who took upon Himself the form of a slave, and bought us with a great price.

Blessed de Montfort always spoke of the "St. Esclavage" as ultimately referred to God, and as the slavery of Jesus in Mary, and the principle of this bondage through the hands of Mary has been approved of, directly and indirectly, by several of the Popes, amongst whom may be mentioned Gregory XV, Urban VIII, and Alexander VII.

Cardinal Vaughan, in the preface which he wrote for the fifth edition of Father Faber's translation of the *Treatise on True Devotion*, says: "The teaching of Blessed Grignon de Montfort is further illustrated by the words spoken by the Blessed Virgin to St. Bridget, in those Revelations which have three times passed under the examination of the Holy See. She said, 'He who sees God sees me, and he who sees me may see the Divinity and Humanity in me as in a mirror, and me in God. For whoever sees God sees Three Persons in Him, and whoever sees me, sees as it were, the Three

¹ *Treatise on True Devotion*, p. 105.

Persons. For the Deity folded me in Itself, with my soul and body and filled me with every virtue, so that there is no virtue in God which does not shine in me.' " ¹

I. The practice preached by the Blessed de Montfort is nothing less than a constant and perfect renewal of the vows and promises made in baptism, and is fully explained in his *Treatise*. "Every Christian before his baptism was the slave of the devil, seeing that he belonged to him. He has in baptism, by his own mouth or by the mouth of his sponsors, solemnly renounced Satan, his pomps and his work, and he has taken Jesus Christ for his Master and Sovereign Lord, to depend upon him as the slave of love. *This is what we do*, by the present devotion. We renounce, as in the formula of consecration, the devil, the world, sin and self, and we give ourselves entirely to Jesus through the hands of Mary. Nay, we do even more, for in baptism we ordinarily speak by the mouth of another, namely, by our Godfather or Godmother, and so we give ourselves to Jesus Christ, not by ourselves, but through another. But in this devotion we do it by ourselves voluntarily, knowing what we are doing. Moreover, in holy baptism we do not give ourselves to Jesus by the hands of Mary, at least not in an expressed manner, and we do not give Him the value of our good actions. We remain entirely free after

¹ Rev., Book I, Chap. xiii.

baptism, either to apply them to whom we please, or to keep them for ourselves. But by the devotion we give ourselves to God, expressly by the hands of Mary, and we consecrate to Him the value of all our actions.” ¹

Here comes in most fittingly the tribute rendered to Our Lady by St. Bernard, whose words are quoted by Father Faber in *All for Jesus*, page 159 :—

“ Whatever you are going to offer, remember to commend it to Mary, that grace may return to the Giver of Grace through the same channel whereby it flowed into you. Not that God was unable to infuse grace as He willed without this aqueduct, but He chose to provide a channel for you. For your hands are perhaps filled with blood, or soiled with gifts which you have not altogether shaken off from them ; therefore, that little which you are going to offer, take care, if you do not wish to be repulsed, to give to Mary to offer with those worthy and acceptable hands of hers. For those hands are as whitest lilies, and the lover of lilies will never reprove, as not found amongst lilies, what is found in Mary’s hands.”

II. The True Devotion is a *short* way to Jesus.

“ The enemy will try to hinder the advance of Mary’s servant, or to make him retrace his steps, or to stumble, but with the support and guidance of his Mistress, without falling, without drawing back

¹ *Treatise on True Devotion*, p. 88.

one step, without even slackening his pace, he shall advance with great strides towards Jesus.”¹

III. It is a *perfect* way, because Mary is the most perfect and most holy of creatures, and because Jesus took no other road to come to us through her.

“Other practices of piety allow to the human will a larger amount of liberty and latitude to form our own initiative. This is not the case with those who fasten their souls to hope in Mary as to an abiding anchor. She is the *guide* in all difficulties, and her servants need only follow her lead with confidence and docility and they will enjoy a holy liberty, a freedom from restraint, and a peaceful and loving trust in her guidance which will render life a sweet and easy foretaste of the great hereafter that will be their portion for ever.”

IV. Lastly, it is a *sure* way to bring us to our home. She has made all human heresies come to naught. *Sola cunctas hæresses intermisti in universo mundo.*”

To sum up then :—

The True Devotion brings us along a path that is *easy* because of the fullness of grace and unction of the Holy Ghost which fills it to overflowing. It is *short*, since it leads us without delay or interruption to the feet of Jesus. It is a *perfect* road, since no mud nor dust nor spot of sin defiles it; and finally, it is a *sure* way, as it brings us without fall or stumble, without doubt or danger, to the source of all good.

¹ *True Devotion*, p. 108.

It is a way that grows familiar day by day, and hour by hour, to thousands, working miracles of grace in hardened hearts, bringing light and comfort where there was only darkness and despair. It is the suitable prelude to what Father Faber terms "that sublime augmentation of devotion to Our Blessed Lady which the prophecies and revelations of holy men and women have announced as the characteristic of the Last Saints, who shall precede the doom and be to the end of the Church what the Apostles were to the beginning."

CHAPTER XXIV

DE MONTFORT AS A POET

THERE is a fascinating side of Montfort's character and work that demands a special, though brief, record at our hands. He was a poet-priest, a charming mixture of zeal and fire that adds new dignity to his preaching, and sets him high above the missionaries of his time. The poetic compositions that have so far survived him number a hundred and sixty pieces of varied excellence and style, not written to please the ear or flatter the mind, but destined to give power and pathos to his mission. Thus he tells us :—

“Voici mes vers et mes chansons :
S'ils ne flattent pas les oreilles,
Ils riment de grandes merveilles.

.
“Lisez-les donc et les chantez,
Pensez-les et les méditez ;
N'y cherchez point l'esprit sublime,
Mais la vérité que j'exprime.”
.

Like a celebrated artist who constantly reproduced in his paintings the face of his mother, the only woman whom he loved, De Montfort, in his

prose and poetry never fails to give to Mary the first place in speech and writing, as he did in heart and affection.

O MARIE.

“ Que n'ai-je une voix de tonnerre,
Afin de chanter en tous lieux
Que les plus heureux de la terre
Sont ceux qui vous servent le mieux ?

“ Marie est ma grande richesse,
Et mon tout, auprès de Jésus.
C'est mon bonheur, c'est ma tendresse,
C'est le trésor de mes vertus.”

Of his *True Devotion*, which has come down to us so mysteriously, he says :—

“ Je fais tout en elle et par elle ;
C'est un secret de sainteté
Pour être à Dieu toujours fidèle,
Pour faire en tout sa volonté.”

The love of the Cross that filled his soul with unceasing sadness, reflected on his features, and pathetically expressed by his emaciated figure, tottering under a heavy cross, in imitation of his Master—the central figure of his famed processions—finds a place in his verses :—

“ On va dans la Patrie
Par le chemin des croix ;
C'est le chemin de vie,
C'est le chemin des rois.

Toute pierre est taillée
Avec précision,
Afin d'être posée
Dans la sainte Sion."

Rejoicing in the prospect of humiliations, he hails his future Company of Mary :—

" Prêtres, allons à la suite
D'un Dieu pauvre et mort en croix.
Puisqu'il nous en sollicite,
Prêtons l'oreille à sa voix."

Sometimes his spirit soars to higher flights, the light of Heaven is on his features, and in rapt accents, like another Francis, he calls on all creation to join him in praising the wonders of God's love :—

" L'autre jour quand je voyageais,
L'amour me montrait ses attraits ;
O charité suprême,
Cent mille fois et à jamais,
Mon amour, je vous aime ;

" Je criais le long des côteaux,
L'avez-vous vu, bois et ruisseaux ?
Cherchez le moi, petits oiseaux,
En messagers fidèles.
Et venez, pour finir mes maux,
M'en donner des nouvelles."

All nature seemed to whisper to him secrets of

the Most High, and its charms and varied beauties appealed strongly to his artistic temperament. In the depths of the forest he studied as in a book the wondrous changes of leaf and tree and fleeting shadow over the many-hued foliage that dressed the woodlands with varied colours. He gives a realistic picture of his favourite retreat at Mervent, where he often retired to commune with God :—

“ Tout me plaît dans cet aimable lieu,
Loin de moi le monde et ses alarmes.
Je ne vis ici que pour mon Dieu ;
Le matin, dès que la douce aurore
A chassé les ombres de la nuit,
C'est mon Dieu que ma prière implore,
Et lui seul est l'astre qui reluit.”

• • • • • • •

Not the least of the glories of this apostle was his early devotion to the Sacred Heart. It seemed to be to him a divine communication of the great Revelation made to Blessed Mary Margaret in his early years, when her message was still unknown to all save a chosen few. Amongst the number were the Sisters of the Visitation, whom he thus congratulates on the favour so signally conferred on them :—

“ O très saintes religieuses,
Mes vers ne sauraient exprimer,
Combien je vous estime heureuses
D'avoir ce grand Cœur pour l'aimer.

Voulant vous avoir en partage,
 Il a fait son palais chez vous ;
 Il est aussi votre héritage,
 Ce qui n'est pas commun à tous."

.

There is another, a more effective style of composition, that presents him to us, not in the familiar light of a loving father seeking to reclaim the repenting sinner, or as a humble servant of the Lord crushed beneath the Cross, but as the stern vindicator of God's offended majesty, and the indignant rebuker of those who let His temples and His altars crumble into dust:—

" Tout reluit chez Monsieur, il est très bien meublé ;

L'église est dans l'oubli, l'autel est dépouillé,
 Le pavé tout brisé, le toit sans couverture,
 Les murs tout écroulés et tout couverts d'ordure.

.

" On y vient quelquefois, le soir ou le matin,
 Pour voir, pour être vu, pour couper son chemin,
 Pour entendre un sermon qu'un grand abbé prépare,
 Mais pour Jésus-Christ seul, oh ! que la chose est rare ! "

He spares neither rank nor sex, but scourges all alike with scorpions. Thus he holds up to contempt the worldlings of the day—the golden

youth, the pompous ecclesiastic, the giddy votary of pleasure :—

“ Le luxe s’est fait passage
 Dans les habits de ce temps,
 Dans les repas, l’équipage,
 Les meubles, les ornements.

“ Les demoiselles vêtues
 De leurs habits d’arlequins
 Se promènent dans les rues
 Sur leurs petits brodequins.

“ Monsieur l’abbé, je vous laisse
 Vous déguiser, vous poudrer.
 En voyant votre mollesse.
 L’Église devrait pleurer.

“ Votre soutane pompeuse
 Fait de la bonne faiseuse,
 Votre rabat bien tiré,
 Votre chapeau si lustré.

“ Votre ceinture volante,
 Vos beaux souliers si mignons,
 Votre manière galante,
 Mais en vain nous vous peignons.”

What a world of satire underlies these lines? What a contrast between Monsieur l’abbé with his “soutane pompeuse” and his “chapeau si lustré,” his “beaux souliers si mignons,” and poor

De Montfort in his shabby garments, with head uncovered and worn shoes.

By far the most destructive, most graphic, and most terrible denouncements of this Christian Juvenal are found in his poem, "Sur les déreglements de Rennes"—a town that knew him not in the time of his visitation, and that was destined to undergo a fearful fate. This celebrated effusion has been published *in extenso* with commentaries and corroborative documents, but one verse is quite sufficient for our purpose:—

"Adieu, Rennes, Rennes, Rennes!

On déplore ton destin,

On t'annonce mille peines,

Tu périras à la fin,

Si tu ne romps pas les chaînes,

Que tu caches dans ton sein.

Adieu, Rennes, Rennes, Rennes!

On déplore ton destin."

 :

The wicked city which drew down this historic censure, and which, like another Sodom, had resisted grace, met its doom eight years after the announcement so prophetically given of its destruction. In 1720, an immense conflagration raged through its whole extent; it lasted fifteen days, and a third of the houses were burnt to the ground.

To the saintly versifier no compositions seemed so helpful to his mission as those which treated

in simple terms of the truths of religion, the necessity of prayer and the preparation for the Sacraments. The verses on those subjects formed an attractive substitute for the system of catechetical instruction then unknown and now so generally adopted. Of them he could well claim :—

“ Prédicateurs dans mes chansons,
 Vous pouvez trouver vos sermons ;
 J’en ai digéré la matière,
 Pour vous aider et pour vous plaire.”

No less important were the rousing hymns of invitation to his mission, treating of God’s judgments, of the eternal hereafter, and of the mercy of God to hardened sinners. They were usually chanted by a specially-trained choir of lay-brothers, with resonant voices, who accompanied De Montfort. Often those *chansons* were sung in unison, accompanied by instrumental music supplied by bands of the garrison towns through which they journeyed. In the morning came the *réveille*, re-echoing through streets and plain and neighbouring hills :—

“ Allons écouter le Sauveur,
 Qui parle en le prédicateur
 Afin de toucher notre cœur.
 Cherchons la grâce,
 Qui touche et qui passe.
 Cherchons la grâce et le vrai bonheur.”

.

Like a clanging bell came this repeated call,

now near, now far, carried away by the breezes, summoning the villagers in the fields and the toilers in the vineyards, reminding all that the hour of grace had come, and predisposing souls for the miracles soon to be wrought by the magic words of the preacher. And when he ceased and his concluding words were hushed in the sobs of his hearers, arose the hymn of sorrow with its mingled burden of reproach and hope in God's mercy :—

“ J'ai perdu Dieu par mon péché.

Ah ! que mon cœur en est touché

Faut-il me voir ainsi taché ?

Faut-il voir mon Dieu fâché ? ”

This expressive act of sorrow is well conveyed in the familiar modern hymn :—

“ Jesu, my God, behold at length the time,

When I resolve to turn away from crime ;

Pardon me, Jesus, Thy mercy I implore,

I will never more offend Thee ; no, never more.”

His swan song that came from the pallid lips, soon to be sealed for ever, was destined to attain an undying fame. It was chanted by his Daughters of Wisdom in the dread days of the Revolution, when, carried in the tumbrils to the Guillotine, it stirred the cruel hearts of the wretches who surrounded the carts, and caused them, at the eleventh hour, to clamour for the lives of those angels who sang so sweetly on their way to execution.

It was adopted by his countrymen of La Vendée,

and became at once their battle-cry and act of faith in their hopeless struggle against the hordes of the infidel Republic. To his children of to-day it is an invitation to despise the things of earth and cling to heaven :—

“ Allons, mes chères amis,
Allons en Paradis ;
Quoi qu'on gagne en ces lieux,
Le Paradis vaut mieux.”

• • • • • •

“ On, on, my friends to Paradise,
God's Paradise on high,
Whatever be our gain on earth,
'Tis surer gain to die.”

In conclusion, we may be pardoned for quoting the following beautiful translation of De Montfort's most popular hymn, as given in a sympathetic article on “The Protection of Mary,” by T. G. D., in the *Irish Rosary*, August, 1911 :—

“ Mary is my countless treasure,
After Jesus, all to me,
She is my love, my only pleasure,
She is my store of sanctity.

Let my voice the thunder copy ;
Let it roar from East to West :
'There are none on earth so happy,
As are those who serve her best.'

She is the Ark of mine alliance,
Where I gaze on holiness ;
She who held sin in defiance
Cloaks my lowly wretchedness.

Mary is my chapel—ever,
Jesus is at home within ;
There I pray secure, for never
Can my prayer unheard begin.

Mary is my fort, my refuge,
Safe against insulting foes.
She my ark is in the deluge :
Over her no breaker goes.

When my Lord is angry with me,
Mary soon His wrath prevents :
'Behold Thy Mother,' say I simply,
And forthwith my Lord relents.

When my soul is full of worry,
At sins daily multiplied,
'Help !' I weep, 'O Mary, help me !'
And my soul is pacified.

'Mid the fray how could I hear not
Her own voice repeat to me :
'Courage, child, be brave and fear not ;
I will not abandon thee.'

'Tis she makes me pure and fertile,
 By her pure fecundity.
 'Tis she makes me strong and docile,
 By her deep humility.

I go by Jesus to His Father,
 So am I not turned away ;
 I go to Jesus by His Mother,
 And He cannot say me nay.

I do all by her and in her,
 And I seek perfection so ;
 Faithful then to God for ever,
 Constantly His Will I do.

Fill, my friends, all that is lacking
 Through mine infidelity,
 Christ and Mary, fondly loving,
 In time and in eternity.—Amen."

CHAPTER XXV

DE MONTFORT AS A PREACHER

BLESSED DE MONTFORT was not a pulpit orator. No flights of fancy marked his efforts. He was simplicity itself. He had early learned the secret of His Divine Master. He was all things to all men, and his words came forth and penetrated, as with divine fire, the hardest hearts, and the most obstinate sinners.

One of his favourite practices was that of preceding the Exercises by the recitation of the Fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary. He used to explain that the seed which was sown should be watered and plentifully sprinkled by the rain of "Hail, Marys," to produce abundant and lasting fruit.

He sometimes preached sermons without words.

A worthy member of a religious Order, who was witness of the fact, relates, that one day, having ascended the pulpit, Montfort suddenly drew out a large crucifix which he always carried with him, placed it so high that it might be seen from the pulpit, and without saying anything came down at once, giving his audience to understand that it was Jesus Christ Crucified who was preaching to them, and to whom they were to listen. Then, in order to render the voice of this Divine Preacher

still more efficacious, he took another crucifix, and presenting it to the faithful, exclaimed: "Behold your Saviour; are you not grieved for having offended Him?" Strange to say, all hearts were suddenly penetrated with compunction, and the eyes of those present proclaimed what they felt, by torrents of tears. Everyone waited with holy impatience the approach of the missionary, who went through the whole church presenting his crucifix to each person to be adored and kissed. This silent mode of preaching drew forth more tears from the eyes and more sobs from the heart of those who witnessed it, and produced more conversions than the most affecting sermon would have done.

He did not hesitate to call sensible objects to his aid in order to fix attention on the subject chosen. Upon one occasion, when preaching to some rich persons who had assembled together in a room of the presbytery, he began by calling for a needle and a thick cord, and then, having tried in vain to pass the cord through the needle's eye, he took occasion from this to explain the obligation of the rich to make themselves poor and humble in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. At another time, he had a great fire lit near the church, and collecting together a number of rough and vagabond children, he warned them against the sin of theft and its punishment. Pointing to the fire, into which none of them could put their hand, he tried successfully to make them understand that

a far more searching fire was in store for thieves, that would burn for all eternity.

His greatest and most sensational sermon of this description comprised an exercise which he called the "preparation for death," and which he often gave at places where he had preached before. He delivered two sermons each day and added a conference. The sermons touched upon the principal truths that have relation to death, and which he reduced to seven : "*We must die—Death is near—Death is dreadful—Death is terrible—The death of the sinner is to be feared—The death of the just is to be desired—As a man lives so does he die.*" The conferences were more familiar. He replied with simplicity to the questions which an ecclesiastic proposed to him upon the manner for preparing for death, and of meeting its approach. The first two days were employed in making, as it were, a last confession, and on the third day Communion was received, apparently by way of *Viaticum* ; on the last evening, in order that his previous instructions might make a still greater impression, the holy missionary himself represented a person at the point of death. He was seated in a large chair ; near him were two ecclesiastics who performed the office, one of the guardian angel, the other of the tempting spirit. The dying man, with his crucifix in his hand, pressed it often to his lips and heart, casting at the same time looks full of confidence towards heaven, and asking for mercy. He listened with attention to all the good

inspirations of the good angel, and rejected with indignation the suggestions of the evil one, by opposing to them all acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity. The whole representation was so natural and touching that it left the most lively impression upon the minds of the audience. Each one retired in silence, striking his breast, and firmly resolved to lead a holy life, in order to obtain a holy death.

This method of preaching excited some passing ridicule amongst a certain section, but scoffs and scorn availed not, since the effects produced were salutary and long abiding.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE COMPANY OF MARY

BLESSED DE MONTFORT did not live to witness the progress of the two Congregations which he founded.

Like the hidden manuscript containing the secret of his "True Devotion" that lay for years concealed from the eyes of men until the time had come for its discovery, so it would seem that for a time the children of his heart, the little Company of Mary and the Daughters of Wisdom, were to live their lives hidden and unknown until it was God's will to reveal their destiny.

De Montfort had intended by the formation of the Little Company of Mary to bring together a community of priests and lay-brothers who would work in his spirit and under the protection of his Mistress for the salvation of souls. Only two priests and seven brothers had joined him before his death. MM. Mulot and Valet had shared his last labours as missionaries, but they did not seem to have entered into any real engagement or to have established an organization. For nearly two years, in prayer and solitude, at Saint Pompain, they had awaited some manifestation of the Divine Will with regard to the future.

At length, towards the end of Lent, 1718, the Curé of Loges invited them to come and labour in his parish. They were under the impression that the invitation only extended to the duty of hearing confessions, and they joyfully consented. To their great astonishment, when they arrived they learned that the Curé had announced to his parishioners that a regular mission was to be opened by the *successors of De Montfort*. Filled with consternation at the prospect placed before them, they decided to decline the task. As, however, the Cure insisted, they were forced to yield.

They had made no preparations, were not trained in preaching, and had not the wealth of words that go to make up the orator, but with a humble and confident reliance on God, and the intercession of their late Superior, they essayed their first attempt as missionaries.

The effect was startling in its success. It may be judged from the words of M. d'Hillerin, a dignitary of the Cathedral of La Rochelle:—

“There was nothing vehement in the tone or action of the preacher; the truths of which he spoke were not always those which were in themselves striking. Even when he used most action there was not that arrangement, or those touches of eloquence of which Christian orators make use to stir the human heart, and yet the effect of his words upon his audience was almost marvellous. It was not simply sighs, accompanied by tears, but a terrible burst of cries and sobs

which rose on all sides, and which showed how strong was the impression made by the missionary on all alike, without distinction, who listened to him."

After this significant event, there was no longer any doubt that De Montfort's spirit was with them, and all united in regarding M. Mulot as his successor.

Henceforth the Company of Mary gradually grew in numbers and reputation and in devotion to the end for which they were founded.

They faithfully observed the code of rules carefully drawn up by the Blessed De Montfort, and devoted themselves exclusively to the work of giving missions.

Before the French Revolution they had, in the interval of sixty-three years, given four hundred and thirty missions, generally lasting a month. Notwithstanding the persecution of the Jansenists, they preached, catechized, and instructed through every part of France, until they had effected a reformation in their native land similar to the change effected at the same time in Italy by the Congregation of the Holy Redeemer.

In 1853, the formal approval of the Holy See blessed their efforts and gave a new stimulus to their apostleship. Like their Blessed Founder, whose familiar motto, *Da mihi animas*, was engraven in their hearts, they thirsted for other conquests and longed to bring across the sea the

blessings of the faith, and the extension of the reign of Jesus in Mary.

In 1883 they found a home in far-off Canada. There they took deep root. House succeeded house, and new foundations sprang up as if by magic, and to-day they are found in Ottawa, Montreal, Kingston, Vancouver, and lower down, across the great St. Lawrence, they are settling in Port Jefferson and Brooklyn.

In Denmark, the heart of Protestantism, they effected a settlement, and established a house at Roskilde, where already many heretics have made their abjuration, and have been received into the bosom of the one True Church. In Iceland, the land of eternal frost, De Montfort's sons have secured a footing, and are already reaping a harvest of souls.

In Darkest Africa, near Lake Nyassa and the River Zambese, a mission of the little Company was commenced in 1903. In a few years schools have been erected there and are flourishing under the direction of the Fathers and the Daughters of Wisdom. Prayer is recited in common in the villages. Catechetical instructions are daily given, and are well attended. The Sacraments are frequented and the new converts communicate twice a month, or once a week. Notwithstanding the small number of workers—ten priests, two brothers, and eight sisters—several outlying stations have been erected, two hundred and fifty adults have been baptized, and in 1907 over six hundred

faithful were emancipated from the darkness of paganism.

In South America an extensive district, comprising two Apostolic Prefectures, has been placed in charge of twelve Fathers of the Company, assisted by lay-brothers and the Daughters of Wisdom.

So late as 1910 an apostolic Montfort School has been established at Romsey (Hampshire), a pleasant and healthy site, between the district of Winchester and Southampton. Here a youthful band of future Priests of Mary are being trained in Montfort's spirit, and prepared to spread the devotion to his Mother that will ever be linked with his name and his glory.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE CONGREGATION OF WISDOM

It was in La Rochelle, towards the close of his strenuous life in 1715, that Blessed De Montfort called together a few of the Daughters of Wisdom, whom he had established in Poitiers. He asked them to assist him in taking charge of the school for girls which he had just started in La Rochelle. He had, with the approval of Mgr. de Champfleury, Bishop of the diocese, drawn up a code of rules for their observance, and had placed at their head his old friend, Sister Marie Louise of Jesus, whom he had trained after his own heart. There is no need to repeat his solemn commission to his newly-formed congregation, and his touching farewell already narrated. He had foretold a wondrous future in store for their organization, and to-day his prophetic announcements have been amply fulfilled. The Daughters of Wisdom are numbered by the thousand. They are spread throughout the world, ministering to the wants of the poor and miserable in the hospitals, orphanages, and other charitable institutions, and bringing with them the comforting assurance that in their persons God has visited His people, and has seen fit to honour their founder and his apostolate.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE PRIESTS OF MARY

THE latest development of the progress of the movement to propagate devotion to the Blessed Virgin, as preached and inspired by Blessed De Montfort, is the establishment of the Congregation known as the "Priests of Mary." Its existence dates only from the year 1907, when after the Marial Congress of Einsiedeln (1906) a number of priests resolved to form themselves into an association of ecclesiastics whose objects would be :—

1. To sanctify their sacerdotal life by the practise of Perfect Devotion to Mary.

2. To make use of this Devotion as a powerful means of assisting their Apostolate in establishing the reign of Jesus Christ through Mary.

On 13th February the Society received the approval of Pius X, who, on that occasion, granted the members the favour of a privileged altar all the days of the week. On 15th September of the same year, His Eminence Cardinal Vannutelli accepted its patronage and wrote a memorable letter of recommendation of the Society.

On 29th December, 1908, His Holiness received in audience Father Gebhard, the Director of the

Association in Rome, and what passed in that interview is best recorded in his own words:—

“ I had been long expecting the privilege of a private audience from the Pope, but owing to his indisposition my hopes were disappointed until last night the ticket of admission came, and I was received by our kind and Holy Father this morning, the Feast of St. John, 29th December.”

“ The principal object of my audience was to present to His Holiness a beautiful copy of the new Italian translation of Blessed De Montfort's *Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin* and also of the *Manual of the Priests of Mary*. Before publishing this new Italian translation I was obliged to submit it to Mgr. Lepidi, P.P.A., for the *imprimatur*. After reading it, Mgr. Lepidi told me he had been very much edified and that he would say a word about it to His Holiness. So, when I presented the book to the Pope this morning, I said : ‘ Perhaps your Holiness remembers having been told by Mgr. Lepidi about this new translation of the *True Devotion* ? ’

“ ‘ Yes,’ he said ; ‘ I remember.’ ”

“ ‘ Your Holiness knew Blessed De Montfort's treatise before, I think ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Sicuro—certainly ; and I told Mgr. Lepidi that before writing my Encyclical Letter, “ *Ad diem illum*,” for the Jubilee in 1904, I read it over, and while composing I tried to quote some passages from memory.’ ”

"Then I presented my request, *supplica*, in which I asked His Holiness to deign to address a word of encouragement to such as practise and endeavour to spread this devotion. Pius X took up his pen and wrote:—

" 'Juxta preces Tractatum de vera Devotione erga Beatam Mariam Virginem a Beato de Montfort amabiliter exhibitum enixe commendamus et ejusdem Tractatus lectoribus Apostolicam Benedictionem peramanter impertimus.'

" 'Dat. 27 Decembris, 1908.

" 'PIUS PP. X.'

"When he gave me back the *supplica*, with the kind word from him, I said: 'This little book, Santo Padre, has already done so much good.'

" 'E tanto bello. And it is so beautiful,' he said.

"Then with the *Manual of the Priests of Mary*, I reminded him that at the end of his Jubilee Letter to his Clergy he recommended associations of priests, and I asked him that on the occasion of his Golden Sacerdotal Jubilee he might deign to have himself inscribed in our Society of the Priests of Mary, which he had already blessed, granting to its members the concession of a privileged altar. Pius X accepted willingly. He is now one of us—a member of our Association."

Four years have not yet elapsed and to-day the Priests of Mary number over five thousand. In Rome alone seven hundred members are en-

rolled, with the Sovereign Pontiff at their head. In France there are two thousand seven hundred. There are three thousand in Germany and Italy. Within the last three years two thousand have made the Act of Consecration in Spain. There are one hundred and twenty-six Irish Priests of Mary, twenty hail from England, and twenty-five from America.

The *Revue des Prêtres de Marie Reine des Cœurs* is the official organ of the Association and is published every month, under the direction of the Rev. J. M. Texier, St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre (Vendée). The *Manual* blessed by the Pope in his audience with Father Gebhard is issued in four languages, and an English translation has lately been brought out containing the regulations, and the various privileges accorded to the members.¹

The ecclesiastic who desires to join the Society, by applying to the Central Director, 40, Via Dogali, Rome, will receive a diploma and will have his name registered in his book. No other condition is required for participation in the benefits of membership except the solemn act of consecration to his Mother and his Queen.

This engagement to Mary will be a safeguard and a consolation in his many trials on the mission, while it will not interfere with the many duties of his profession in whatever field in the Vineyard of the Lord he may be called on to labour.

¹ *Manual of Priests of Mary*, Browne & Nolan, Ltd.

No more suitable ending can be given to this humble record of De Montfort and his work than the words of Father Faber¹:—

“ I cannot think of a higher work, or a broader vocation for anyone, than the simple spreading of this peculiar devotion of the Venerable Grignon de Montfort. Let a man but try it for himself, and his surprise at the graces it brings with it, and the transformations it causes in his soul, will soon convince him of its otherwise almost incredible efficacy as a means for the salvation of men, and for the coming of the Kingdom of Christ. Oh! if Mary were but known, there would be no coldness to Jesus then. Oh! if Mary were but known, how much more wonderful would be our faith, and how different would our Communions be. Oh! if Mary were but known, how much happier, how much holier, how much less worldly should we be, and how much more should we be living images of our sole Lord and Saviour, her dearest and most blessed Son.”

¹ Father Faber's Preface to *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, by De Montfort.

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